WARBECK OF WOLFSTEIN.

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WARBECK OF WOLFSTEIN.

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La fin couronne les œuvres.

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WARBECK OF WOLFSTEÏN.

CHAPTER I.

"The ample proposition that Hope makes
"In all designs begun on earth below,
"Fails in the promis'd largeness!"

Shakspeare.

VALLENSTEÏN had now full leisure for reflection, and plenty of food for it: the strange reverse in the fortunes of his father, a man whom he had never known, nor could conceive, other than great and powerful:—to see him degraded from his high command, equalled with those who so lately trembled at his nod, or ripened in his smile—it was a transition so marvellous, as his thoughts could hardly consider steadily. On the other hand,

his conjectures were vainly employed in scrutinizing the probabilities which might have led to the changes even then taking place in Marchfeldt castle. He had heard the Friar assert that the event which had reached the eve of celebration would never be fulfilled. What might be the cause of this sudden frustration of Wolfsteïn's hopes? Had his dark, malicious, ferocious temper been too strong for his hypocrisy, and revealed itself prematurely? Such a notion was not ill founded; for, thought he, if the very babes of the hamlet shudder instinctively at the sight of Wolfsteïn, surely the penetrating eye of Wilhelm's sister must detect the fiend where he lurked.

Vallensteïn, soon after his arrival in the neighbourhood, had learned the absence of Conrade, as it had, of course, been one of his first objects to obtain a conference with that faithful and well-tried domestic: now he had no suspicion of his return, or he would not have puzzled

himself long on the probable cause of Wolfsteïn's discomfiture.

The tomb where the ashes of Wilhelm and Blanche mingled in their last deep slumber attracted his footsteps; he hung over it in mournful meditation; he remembered how Wilhelm had envied the grim and ghastly sleepers who strewed the banks of the Sala the morning after his first battle.

"Ay, Wilhelm," said he, "I could not then comprehend thy feelings; but events change the heart wonderously! Since that day I have seen life under different aspects!"

Hour after hour did he employ in pacing the dark long aisles, or in leaning on the tomb which held all that was mortal of his friend. The hour of matins had long sounded, still Father Felix came not: what could detain him? At length, impatience and the restlessness of suspense, broke in on milder musings, and Vallensteïn began to fear that his vigils were held in vain. He

himself had repeatedly trimmed the lamps and the tapers which burned before the several shrines, or dimly illumined, at long intervals, the narrow vaulted cloisters; but the oil in many of the lamps had already failed, and it was plain that some unforeseen occurrence had detained the Friar far beyond his intentions. Fretful, and despairing to obtain the end of this weary night's watch, he began pondering uneasily on the length of time which was likely still to elapse ere the gates would be open, and he could escape from the murky damps and winking lights which surrounded him into the cool pure air. At that moment the slow approach of a footstep fell upon his ear; he concealed himself behind the tomb near which he was standing, when the private door which led from the castle opened, and the object of his long and eager expectation appeared. His first impulse was to reveal himself immediately; but the overwhelming affliction under which the Friar evidently laboured struck him

with dismay, and he paused; while the good old man, placing his taper on the tomb, fell prostrate before the shrine of the Virgin, and, in grief-broken accents, besought Heaven to restore the dying Louisa to his prayers. Nothing could exceed the horror and distress of Vallenstein, when, amid the heavy sobs which interrupted the old man's orisons, he distinguished those words. Still was he doomed to wrestle with suspense, for, until the Friar arose from his devotions, the slightest interruption would have been an outrage which he could not, dared not hazard; and so busied in fervent petition was the heart of the good man, that poor Vallensteïn stood distractedly waiting the moment when his eager solicitude might obtain some relief. At length that moment came; the Friar arose, his agitation calmed apparently by the devout exercise in which he had been engaged. Vallensteïn quitted his lurking place; but when Felix beheld the figure

of a man present itself from behind the tomb, "Avaunt!" he.cried, "dark agent of Satan! What dost thou here? Shall not this spot be sacred in thine eyes? Avaunt, thou murderer!"

"Hear me father! Hear me!" cried Casimir.

"What must I hear? What wouldst thou do more? Thou hast blighted the sweetest rose that ever bloomed! Art thou not content? Avaunt, thou fiend! Never before have I closed mine ear to man's entreaty:—but thou—thou art a monster!"

"Oh, father! Holy Felix, look upon me! I am no Wolfsteïn! I abhor that man even as thou dost abhor him!"

"Who art thou then?" asked the Friar with a bewildered gaze, "and what dost thou here?"

"Alas, father! when I think who I am, and what brought me hither, did I not tremble to insult this holy place, my heart would relieve itself in curses on

that wretch for whom thou mistakest me, and who has so basely usurped my name and darkened my fair prospects. I am indeed Vallensteïn,—the Vallensteïn Wilhelm loved,—the brother of his choice!"

"And art thou no counterfeit? Art thou verily Casimir? Alas, poor youth! thou shouldst have come sooner! Oh, what an hour of misery might have been averted!"

"And is it yet too late, my father? Is all hope at an end?"

"I know not! I know not! Wilhelm died; and, I fear me, she is dying! I saw him laid within that marble by the side of his pale bride, and I chanted the death-mass over him; but Louisa,—she is the last!"

A deep and hollow groan followed, as though it would have rived his heart to the centre, and the slow tear rolled down his aged cheek. The feelings of Casimir became painfully concentrated: he ap-

proached, and laid his hand on the grey sleeve of the Friar's gown.

"Tell me," said he, in an inward voice, "has he murdered her? Has he murdered the sister of him who sleeps in that sepulchre? If he has, the black blood from his heart shall flow for it! I will hunt him through the world, father!"

"Be it far from thee, my son! The blood which thou sheddest in revenge will cleave to thine hand! Think where thou art, and who hears thee, my son! No, no,—leave vengeance to Heaven!"

"Where is Wolfsteïn, my father?"

"I know not:—he went hence yesterday, and I trust he is far away."

"And how, by what means, my father, was the base counterfeit revealed?"

"By the return of Conrade from Vienna. Even should she die, sure it were better that her innocent soul should join its kindred in a happier clime, than suffer the long, slow trial of a life united to

the destiny of a fiend! Another day, my son, and these hands were to have tied the fatal knot!"

"I knew it, my father! I knew it! Louisa's guardian angel slumbered not! I was lurking nigh—I was ready! I would have dashed the cup from his lip; yea, snatched his bride from him at the altar!"

"Ay! It is plain then, that Providence was doubly armed against the hypocrite! But it was better—I would not that the sacred peace of this place had been so broken!"

"Yet, tell me, I beseech you, father, has the detection of this wretch fallen so heavily on the gentle spirit of Louisa? Was she so bound to him, that to break the tie has broken her heart also? Oh! tell me, father!"

"Alas! I fear it greatly. Who could have penetrated the false seemings of that man? Her person, her liberty is rescued; but, I fear me, he has despoiled her of

her happiness,—nay, even her life hangs upon a thread; and, if she dies, he is her murderer!"

A long pause followed; at length,

"I thought," said Vallenstein, "I flattered myself that the Baroness of Marchfeldt had owned a loftier temper! Yes, I looked not to behold her the helpless, resistless victim of this fiend. This I was unprepared for! And will she then die, think you, father,—because—because she has escaped the fangs of a monster? No: I thought otherwise of Louisa of Marchfeldt!"

The communication of the Friar was wormwood on his palate, and all the poison of jealousy worked within him.

"Father," he exclaimed, "methinks we are both dreaming. If the Baroness of Marchfeldt dies, Wolfsteïn is guiltless! Those officious hands which tore from her her idol, they are to blame. Let us be just, my father! Conrade has murdered her, and has saved me the crime!"

"Ay, son," said Felix mildly, "let us be just. While Louisa believed Wolfsteïn virtuous, and knew him but as Vallensteïn, she gave him all her love; but when he stood in all his deformity before her, a pale, detected hypocrite, she abhorred him! I would you had seen the glance which fell from her eye upon him! I would you had witnessed the cool, resolved dignity with which she bade him from her presence,—the majesty with which she waved him forth!—He raved in impotent wrath, but he trembled, and obeyed her! Alas, I was deceived! I looked but on the calm without, and suspected not the strong internal conflict!"

"Oh, what a woman!" cried Vallensteïn, "and she might have been mine! And now, father, does she rave on Wolfsteïn? Does she utter his name? How is it with her, father? Tell me, for I fain would know."

"She utters no sound, my son.—Look

on that pale, motionless effigy:—such, and so cold and unconscious is Louisa!"

As he spoke, the private door from the Castle opened, and Barbara appeared. "Alas!" cried Vallensteïn, rushing to meet her, "what do you announce? Is it past? Speak! Are there hopes?"

Barbara's senses were too much absorbed in the consternation and sorrow into which the sudden malady of her beloved lady had plunged them, to admit of more than a faint and temporary surprise at the presence of a stranger at that hour in the chapel. As for the questions with which he assailed her, they were the general language of the castle: no one spoke any other.

"Father," said she, turning from him to Felix, "come to my lady! She speaks, —she named you, and she named the Count:—she seems as one awaking from a sleep, but we know not how we should reply to her; therefore hasten, father!"

This intelligence overcame Vallensteïn,

whose mind was subdued by the long and fierce conflict it had sustained he burst into tears.

"Be comforted, my son!" said the Friar, kindly pressing his hand—"*I* do not despair—we shall see better times yet."

"But shall we meet again, father? Will you, from time to time, have pity on my anxiety?"

"Doubt it not, son: return at noon, and I will seek you here."

Then, having opened for him the door which afforded egress towards the village, he pronounced his benediction, and quitted him.

Exhausted, weary, and wretched, our hero returned to the spot from whence he had the preceding evening walked to the chapel, to Stephen's cottage. It was from the artless garrulity of Alice that he had first learned the truth respecting the proceedings at the castle: she, and her little boys, had imperceptibly stolen

an interest in his mind; and, as he shared their brown loaf and drank milk from their pitcher, he felt himself beneath the roof of a friend. Thither then, almost mechanically, he bent his steps; he did not even tap at the door, but lifted the latch, and entered. The voice of lamentation issued from within the curtains which surrounded the bed of poor Alice. Little Wilfred and Leonard, hand in hand, stood in the middle of the room, their dimples composed in a grave and fearful sympathy. At a table near the casement sate a rough peasant, a fine, hearty-looking fellow: his arms were folded, his brow was bent, and he was gnawing his nether lip in all the sternness of sorrow:—it was Stephen, who, in the previous visits young Vallenstein had paid to his cottage, had been absent; for the bounty of the Baroness was not lavished on idleness, and Stephen better understood the comforts and indulgences of his lowly home from the hardy, laborious

life which contrasted them. The instant Casimir entered, the little boys threw off the invisible chain which seemed to bind them to the spot where they stood, and sprang towards him, forgetful of the momentary cloud.

"Oh, father! father! It is he! It is the good gentleman!"

Stephen rose, and placed for him a seat, into which he staggered, almost unable to support himself.

"Dame," said the peasant, "the stranger is ill: what must I give him?"

"Little Wilfred," said Vallensteïn, "give me the pitcher of milk.—I want food;—I am chilled too—but that cheerful blaze will soon revive me."

Stephen looked at him earnestly, and shook his head, saying at the same time to Alice, "I am not mistaken, dame; and if it should prove that thy unlucky tongue has had any thing to do in the sad work there has been at the castle, I would the storm of last winter had blown

this cottage, and all I have in the world, into the Raab! For, under God, by whose goodness comes it that I have any thing? Here, sir," and, looking sternly on Vallensteïn, he held to him the purse of gold he had the day before presented to Alice, "you best know wherefore you gave this costly present to my dame.—You are a stranger—you have been lurking about some days, none can tell why. You have been here from time to time, and Alice there is so proud of her wisdom, that you could easily get from her the little she knew, and the much that she thought, about the young lord who was to marry my lady.—Ay! if some mischief had not come between them, this very morning would have seen them made one by the priest; instead of which the young lord fled in a moment from the castle, no one knows why, nor whither, and my lady, the pride of the whole world, is dying! I accuse nobody. But all this is true; and it is true likewise

that you have been asking my wife many questions that could not concern a stranger, and that you paid her twenty dollars for answering them.—I doubt this money is the price of mischief, and I would not keep it under my roof—no, not for all the wealth of this barony! Ay, sir, from the moment you entered, my mind was made up! Your looks betrayed you; you have been about no good; and, if one may judge by outward tokens, you are no more to be envied than the workers of mischief generally are."

"Indeed, honest Stephen, I am not enviable! The sorrows of the castle are my sorrows; but Heaven knows I am not their author!"

Stephen's misgivings had worked their way into the ductile breast of Alice: she was now convinced that she had actually harboured an incendiary, and that her information was the sole source of all the unhappiness which had arisen at Marchfeldt; that *she* had driven away the bride-

groom, and killed the Baroness; though, on considering the sum total of her intelligence, it would have been difficult to bring it to such an amount. She drew aside the curtain, and fixed her swollen eyes on Casimir with a solemn and accusing look: "Oh, stranger!" cried she, "evil for us was the hour when first you lifted our latch! I never was so deceived before! But you had, to a certainty, an innocent look with you—and then the lads took to you so, all on the sudden!"

"Pooh!" cried Stephen.

"Nay, nay, good man! I am not going to say any more about that. But one thing I *must* say: if you have any regard for yourself, stranger, you'll lose no time, but unload that guilty conscience of yours!—Get shriven as quickly as you may!—And, if you *can* make restitution, do it without tarrying!"

In the very midst of this harangue the door flew open, and in rushed Conrade:

"Ah, sir!" cried he, "do I see you once more? My dear master's friend!"

"Conrade! my dear fellow! Faithful, trusty Conrade!"

"Ah, sir! when I heard the joyful news,—when they told me my Lady was on the eve of marriage with the young Lord Vallensteïn, little did I think such an hour as this was at hand! But who knows what yet we may live to see?"

"Ay," said Alice, who began to be staggered by the cordiality subsisting between Conrade and the suspicious stranger, "who knows? Now, its *my advice* that some one should mount a fleet horse directly, and ride for his life after that young Lord, and tell him, if he does not come back as fast as he went, he'll have a Christian's murder to answer for, and he must be a Turk if he stands that! Mr. Conrade, its a wonder to me you don't go after him!"

"Would he were choked in the Raab!" said Conrade; "but, my Lord, you look

wretchedly; I should hardly know you. I saw Father Felix ere I set out in search of you; he bade me commend him to you, and sends you word that our sweet lady is better, and his hopes are brightening. The deadly trance into which yesterday's shock threw her is past—she knows those around her,—she recollects what has happened, and is only impatient to quit her bed, and be far from Marchfeldt. He has this restlessness to combat; but he has given her a composing medicine, and, when she sleeps, he will keep his promise and meet you in the chapel."

Alice, who forgot her recent conversion to Stephen's faith, now cast on him a triumphant glance.

"Good man," said she, "trust *me* next time! I have told thee often, and I tell thee now, that if children take at once to a man, it is as sure a sign that there's no harm in him, as that it will rain when that bit of salt moistens."

"I hope, sir," said Stephen, "you will forget what I said; but my lady's illness put me beside myself, and, in the soreness of my heart, I could have quarrelled with one of my own little ones. Father Felix and Mr. Conrade would have nothing to say to one that deserved to be ill thought of—I hope you will forget it, sir!"

"I will forgive it, honest Stephen, on condition you retain that purse,—but I will not forget it:—I will remember it, be assured, though not in malice; and, when I am wearied and disgusted by the corruption and treachery the world teems with, I will turn my sick thought for refuge to the simple, zealous integrity I have met in thy cottage!"

So saying, he crossed the threshold, followed by Conrade, and again bent his way towards the scene of his midnight vigils.

CHAPTER II.

"Oh, God! I could be bounded in a nut-shell,
And count myself a king of infinite space,
Were it not that I have bad dreams."

"Which dreams, indeed, are ambition!"

TIME lapsed, and as it lapsed, the malady of the Baroness subsided. Casimir, meanwhile, fixed his head-quarters with his friends Stephen and Alice; but his incessant haunt was the chapel or other immediate precincts of the castle. To enter the castle Father Felix in vain invited him: a certain instinctive sense of propriety warned him to avoid such a step as a trespass, although he would have given half the world to feel himself beneath the same roof with his idol; nay, perhaps, to cross the very gallery in which her apartment stood. None, however, save a lover of "the olden time," a lover

à l'outrance, can understand or justly appreciate such privileges. As the health of the Baroness improved daily, and not a shadow of danger remained to appal the most anxious, Vallenstein recalled to mind the ties which summoned him to Prague. Inured from boyhood to military precision, he had never perhaps known what it was to allow his inclination to supersede his duty: now, for the first time, the struggle between these rivals was strong and fierce, till they came to a compromise; for the young Count determined to wait only till he could obtain one stolen look at the Baroness, and then fly to his father. Soon after, the Lady of Marchfeldt was emancipated from the confinement of her own chamber, with the advice of Father Felix, she took the air on the ramparts; for the season being far advanced, that elevated promenade was preferred, as being farther removed from the damps which rose thick and heavy from the river. By this ar-

rangement Vallensteïn obtained the indulgence he coveted, though, like other privileges to which we have alluded, its value lay chiefly in the rate set on it by him who desired it; for Louisa was wrapped in a thick Polish mantle of sable, and on her head was a cap of the same material; so that, except to a lover, neither face nor figure would have been recognizable. Fenced as she was from the weather, its shrewd temper pierced her fragile frame, so that she but appeared and retired. As Vallensteïn's eye traced the receding form, his breast swelled high with emotion.

"Thank Heaven!" said he, "she will not die! Had Wolfsteïn caused the death of that creature, his dark soul would have triumphed; for such are the achievements in which he glories!"

Father Felix now ventured to hope that the Baroness and her suite might set forward to Vienna in a week; for winter was coming apace, and the good Friar

was naturally anxious that his patient might anticipate its arrival. As for Vallensteïn, the moment *she* quitted the ramparts, without pausing to think, he mounted a horse from the castle stables, and, accompanied by Conrade, rode to St. Guthred's, where he bade adieu to one whose auspicious appearance had so effectually frustrated the machinations of his hated rival, and, followed by his grooms, took little rest till he found himself within his father's palace at Prague.

It may be curious to cast a glance on the actual situation of a disgraced man, the victim of adverse fortune. When Casimir reached the city which was the residence of the fallen general, and especially as he approached the Vallensteïn palace, he could not forbear to wonder at the solemn pomp and pageantry which reigned around: a patrol of armed watchmen paraded the environs, to prevent the slightest noise from without assailing the ears of their master; nay, as young Val-

lenstein and his grooms advanced, a barrier across the street immediately leading to the palace stopped their progress.

"What is all this? Is there danger? Is my father persecuted in his retirement?"

"No, sir," replied the guard, who kept the barrier, "there is neither danger nor persecution. Our duke retires with his face to the enemy, and they are glad to keep aloof; but, since he came to Prague, it is his pleasure that no sound should presume to interrupt his studies;—you must, therefore, alight here, sir:—your horses may not pass."

"Be it so," said young Vallenstein, alighting; yet he could not hear without some astonishment that a man, who had spent his life chiefly amid the tumult of war, should, on the sudden, find the distant sound of a horse's hoof, or rather the idea of it, insupportable; for, in fact, it was impossible that the faintest echo should reach his ear from that spot. This

superb abode was entered by six gates, each of which had its allotted guard, relieved as regularly as though it had been in a state of siege. At the principal of these gates Casimir presented himself, and was met by a young knight to whom that station was entrusted.—"I wish to be admitted immediately to the Duke of Friedland."

"That is impossible, sir.—It is his Excellency's hour of study.—The Emperor himself could not obtain entrance at this moment."

"And when does his Excellency admit the visits of those who would confer with him?"

"He will not be visible till he meets his officers at dinner: soon after that meal he retires to his audience chamber; but the claimants on his attention are so numerous and pressing, that even then your chance of being heard is small."

Vallensteïn was fully prepared to find his father, intrinsically, as great a man as

when he was both the head and the heart of the finest army in Europe; but, as he had only one notion of disgrace, he looked to have seen him neglected and solitary; deserted, save by his own high and constant mind: and thus, thought he, it would be in the history of any other man; but here, fortune and genius are alike invincible.

The gentleman, perceiving him immersed in thought, conceived that the disappointment his earnest desire for admission to the Duke encountered had dejected him.

"Sir," said he, "have you a memorial? Perhaps by the interest of one of the favourite pages or nobles, who are permitted freer access to his Excellency's person, it may reach him this evening, or, at least, to-morrow."

"And is the Duke thus royally served?"

"Six Barons, and as many knights, wear his livery, and relieve each other in personal attendance: sixty pages, the

sons of nobles, wait by turns in his ante-chamber; nor are his military dependants less worthy of their glorious master than his domestic ones.—Generals Terski, Illo, Kinski, Blumenberg, and many others, are in Prague; and the troops so lately disbanded flock hither daily by thousands, unwilling to follow any banners but those of the man who so often led them to conquest*."

"I thank you, sir," said Vallensteïn, "but I will farther encroach upon your courtesy: you say, his Imperial Majesty might wait before this gate till the studies of the Duke are concluded; but he who now addresses you has a prouder title to admission than the Emperor:—I am the

* Lest the reader should be disposed to suspect the *Romancière* of having drawn somewhat extravagantly on the sources of her imagination, she refers him to the authority of that excellent and indefatigable writer, Archdeacon Coxe, for a description of the almost incredible magnificence of this extraordinary man's retirement.—Vide Hist. of the House of Austria, vol. i. part. 2, page 867.

son of him to whom so many brave men adhere in his adversity."

The officer now unfastened the wicket; and applying his mouth to a tube which communicated with the entrance hall, a file of halberdiers appeared, and silently admitted the Count. In the marble hall fifty of these troops, all chosen men of a most formidable aspect, and fully accoutred, were drawn up. He was conducted to the foot of the grand staircase, where stood three pages in sumptuous liveries; these attended him to the first landing, where they transferred him to the guidance of three others, and thus on till he had ascended the stairs, when a nobleman, who held the post of gentleman usher in the household of this haughty Duke, although covered with orders, crosses, and other badges, both of hereditary rank and imperial favour, received the Count, and, to their mutual satisfaction, they recognised each other.

"Ah, Winterfeldt!" cried Casimir, "I

am delighted to see you! Take me to my father.—I was beginning to despair of ever penetrating the ceremonies which envelope him."

"Why," said Winterfeldt hesitatingly, "I conclude there can be no great hazard in affording you access, Count;—but I have no orders, and you are the only man in Europe for whom I would so far venture, as to break the barriers with which your illustrious father surrounds himself."

"Is he alone then?" demanded Vallenstein, in great astonishment.

"No—his studies are usually assisted by that strange man, whom, peradventure, you may have seen occasionally,—not that he is ever met in public, but he is frequently the privileged sharer of the Duke's privacy. I know that this man sometimes visited the Duke in his last campaign, but always with much mystery.—Nay," said he, shuddering, "it is whispered amongst us, that by his means his Excellency was timely warned of all the secret proceedings of his enemies;—

and it is certain he had all the manner of a man prepared. Illo, who was in waiting when he received the Imperial messengers, said that he smiled on them, declaring he already knew their mission*, and would obey it; besides, all arrangements for his retirement were in order. In short, either he has strange emissaries, or his prescience is most wonderful!"

"Ah!" said Casimir, "it is the old Jesuit, Father Fieramosca, whom you mean!—Yes, I have twice seen him:—he

* He was persuaded by a favourite astrologer, who could alone bend his intractable mind, that the stars prognosticated future grandeur,—that his present disgrace would be only temporary. This augury produced its full effect on the romantic temper of Waldsteïn: he received the Imperial messengers with mildness and composure; he laid before them an astrological calculation, and observed, "By these signs I know your message,—the ascendant of the Duke of Bavaria is superior to that of the Emperor: I therefore cannot attach any blame to his conduct, though I regret that he should have so easily sacrificed me. I will obey."—Coxe's Hist. of the House of Austria, vol. i. part 2, chap. li. page 827.

is, in truth, a mysterious being!—But come, dear Winterfeldt, I will not believe my father's interdict extends to me: conduct me therefore to his chamber."

With the most manifest reluctance did Baron Winterfeldt lead the way, through an endless suite of superb apartments, all furnished in a style of regal magnificence, such as the palace of the Cæsars might not aspire to emulate. The pages who waited in the ante-chamber beheld their entrance with countenances on which dismay was legibly depicted, nor did it even entirely disappear when the stranger's claim to tread those inviolable precincts was explained to them.

"Devereux," said Winterfeldt to a youth who seemed to be chief of the pages, "if any one may with impunity open that door, thou art he."

"It is true," replied Devereux ostentatiously, "I may perhaps boast of possessing as large a share as any man of my Lord's countenance, but I have never

before made so bold an experiment. For your sake, Count Casimir, I will try, nevertheless."—And, with the air of one who commits some desperate act on which he may not trust himself to pause, he instantly opened the door and cried at once, "Your Excellency's noble son, Count Casimir of Vallenstein."

The word "audacious" burst in thunder from the lips of the Duke of Friedland, ere the cause of this intrusion reached his ear. He arose precipitately from the table at which he sate, and his companion, the mysterious Fieramosca, for he it was, although, in the suddenness of the surprise occasioned by this unbidden entrance, he had drawn his cowl over his face, as though he would have preferred concealment, flung a large black cloth which lay on the floor near him over the table, and covered entirely whatever stood thereon; having done which, he hastened to the upper end of the room, and drew closer the folds of a thick sable curtain,

which hung from the ceiling to the floor, across the whole breadth of the apartment, which, unlike every other young Vallensteïn had hitherto seen in the palace, had bare plastered walls, on which were drawn figures to him inexplicable, and words of which he knew not the meaning: the uncarpeted floor exhibited similar signs and words, and all the furniture consisted of the table at which the Duke and Fieramosca had pursued their mysterious studies, and the stools on which they had been seated, except celestial globes of various sizes, books, charts, with different representations of the planets, and corresponding symptoms of the astrological calculations in which the students had been interrupted.

Before the elder Vallensteïn recovered his surprise sufficiently to welcome his son, a brief whisper was exchanged with his colleague; then he took the arm of Casimir in silence, and, with somewhat of fierceness in his aspect, turned from

the apartment. Accustomed as young Vallensteïn had been to submit to all the austerities of military discipline beneath his father's rule, there was something wounding to his affection in this cold, haughty, nay, almost unkind, reception; but he resolved to await patiently the result: and, as they walked together through the long range of apartments, he employed himself in recollecting his thoughts and poising his mind: they arrived at length at a small but splendid cabinet.

"Here," said the Duke, "we may be unmolested till dinner time—if, indeed, any place may be held sacred from intrusion!"

Chilled and repulsed, Vallensteïn felt not only his affection but the pride of his heart outraged by the manner in which his father received him.

"I trust," said he coldly, "your Excellency will not visit your page's fault with rigour.—I alone am to blame.—I

alone was guilty of the error of supposing your only son, especially, the events considered which have intervened since our separation, might have formed an exception to the prohibitory orders which govern your household. One lesson, however, suffices:—trust me, my Lord, I shall not forget it."

"No, Count! pardon me; the blame does *not* rest with you! You came hither in total ignorance of the imperative regulations I have thought it meet to institute in my palace. That boy Devereux presumes on my favour and confidence, and must be checked.—So, sir, you are come to visit a ruined man: to look upon the wreck of a stately vessel.—Now solve me this problem: whether is a great man greater in prosperity or adversity?—But peradventure, you will stay with me, and take time to observe."

"A great man, my Lord, with submission, as I understand the phrase, is the *same* through all fortunes; neither in-

toxicated and elated by the prosperous, nor soured by the evil. In the first position I have followed your march with an admiration such as no other character has ever excited in me:—in the second, I doubt not you will prove equal to yourself."

"It is well, Casimir! your theory is excellent! but, although the same heart may be in us through all fortunes, more difference in our bearing is requisite than mere school philosophy teaches. For instance, in prosperity a great man should be affable, popular, careless of pageantry, ready to bend, because it is always at his option to stand erect.—In adversity, pride becomes him,—he should be stern, dignified, resolved, inaccessible, and every thing he speaks or acts should remind those around him that his power is not departed from him."

Casimir bowed in silence: he now held the key to that which had so puzzled him; but whether the change which had

taken place in his father was produced by events on his temper, or whether, as he would have it appear, was the effect of a system, was more than might easily be penetrated. From present appearances young Vallensteïn had but little encouragement to suppose that his haughty parent would interest himself in the adventures which had befallen him since they parted, or even vouchsafe them a hearing: he was however mistaken, for the duke inquired with a sort of lukewarm kindness respecting his success. When he named the man who had superseded his addresses, assumed his name, and taken his place at Marchfeldt, he was interrupted by the question,

"Have Wolfsteïn and you been for any time at variance?"

"From the hour on which we first beheld each other."

"That is strange! Wolfsteïn was much in my confidence, yet he never betrayed his enmity to you—indeed, I cannot call

to mind that he ever spoke of you.—Ay, this explains what was before mysterious! —This makes all simple! Be it known to you, Casimir, that this Wolfsteïn has, by the revelation of some secrets I reposed with him, essentially assisted the Duke of Bavaria and that crafty old hypocrite, Father Joseph, to undermine my credit with the Emperor, or, to speak more accurately, to terrify that deluded prince into demanding my resignation. I never offended Wolfsteïn, and could not guess why he became a convert to my enemies, although I seldom muse long on the motive of state intrigue, as self-interest is the common stimulus; but Wolfsteïn is a singular man; hatred is the main spring of his mind, and destruction the favourite exercise of his powers."

"Detestable viper!" cried Vallensteïn.

The duke smiled.—"He has a powerful genius," said he, "and the world will acknowledge it; but he will make no ef-

fectual use of it, for his own vices will circumvent him;—his desire to ruin his enemy is ever more potent in him than ambition:—he has obtained the world's wonder, and would disdain its applause. It seems then, that Wolfsteïn had no enmity to me; he only thrust at you through my side!—This is the only mystery in the events concerning me that wanted solution, and I thank you for your assistance. Now it remains to be seen what are your future plans. Explain them candidly."

"My father," replied Casimir, "my views and hopes, although they have lost much of their sanguine hue, still tend to the same object:—I would pursue that object until I am rewarded with success, or assured that pursuit is vain."

"You are a modest suitor, young man!—I have aimed high for you—I meditated demanding of the Emperor the princess Cecilia, whose hand he has disposed of to Ladislaus of Poland, but my intention

altered. Albeit, ruined man as I am, the heir of four dukedoms is a son-in-law for the proudest crown in Europe! I would not therefore, were I you, despair of the favour of the Baroness of Marchfeldt. I shall have occasion to employ you ere long at Vienna, where you will not appear, as heretofore, a private man, but radiant with hereditary lustre."

To have an ostensible motive for presenting himself at court was a point he had much at heart. Louisa would soon be there: he might now meet her in his own person, and find the opportunity for restoring the brightness of his name from the tarnish left on it by the use of Wolfsteïn. One of the numerous suites of state apartments in this extensive palace was allotted to Casimir, while a certain number of pages, a chamberlain, gentleman usher, and master of the horse, were appointed to attend his person, as though he were a prince of the imperial blood; and he quickly found the pageantry, with

which it was his father's pleasure to surround him, cumbrous and fatiguing.

At dinner, one hundred of the nobility and principal military who had followed the duke to Prague sate down to table: the covers and dishes were all of massive gold, and the table was in all respects served with more than regal pomp and delicacy; but he who presided at the feast was taciturn, gloomy, and solemn. When he spoke, his words were few, and uttered in a stern, arbitrary tone: his presence seemed awfully oppressive to his guests, who had caught the infection from his silence, and Casimir sorrowfully contrasted this pompous meal with the cheerful, social ones, of which his father was wont to be the soul. The population of Prague were accustomed to press into the great hall, at dinner, to behold the duke and admire his magnificence, and sometimes those who had any appeal to make to his clemency or justice hoped to catch his eye, and receive some

token of encouragement to present their address. On this day Winterfeldt, who sate next young Vallensteïn, directed his attention to a lovely, interesting girl amongst the crowd, whose eyes eagerly followed those of the duke, till at length, mistaking some motion on his part for encouragement, she pressed forward with an extended hand to lay her memorial on the table by his side, when the gentleman in waiting roughly seized her arm, and repulsed her. The little bustle this transaction caused attracted the duke's inquiry, and Winterfeldt, who seemed to feel an interest in the scene, said,

"May it please your Excellency, it is the sister of Desmond, the lieutenant, who, doubtless, is bent on soliciting your gracious pardon of her brother's transgression, or at least the mitigation of his sentence."

"The sentence is irrevocable, and may neither be repealed nor altered," said the duke.

"And what," whispered Vallensteïn to his neighbour, "what is the fault, and what is the punishment?"

"The fault is a slight neglect of orders, and the punishment is death! This rigorous sentence takes place to-morrow."

"Impossible! My father was ever a humane and generous master. It cannot be!"

"It is, alas! nevertheless true, Count," said Winterfeldt. "Desmond is a young Bohemian of family: we have all ventured to the limits of the duke's patience in our intercessions—we must now witness poor Desmond's fate in silence—he dies for our example!"

Young Vallensteïn waited to hear no more, but interrupted the gloomy silence which reigned around, by exclaiming,—"My father, grant me the life of Lieutenant Desmond."

"On what plea, Count Casimir?"

"On the simple one, my Lord, of indulgence to myself. Let it prevail, I

beseech your Excellency. On my soul you shall not repent it!"

He had risen as he spoke: his fine form was thus rendered conspicuous to the multitude, and his noble countenance, animated by the best feelings of man's nature, as he pleaded for a fellow-creature's life, attracted the love and admiration of all who looked upon him:—even the duke gazed on him with ill-concealed pride.

"Be content, sir.—I grant you the life of Lieutenant Desmond! The warrant for his release from the fortress where he awaits his doom shall be made out this evening. Sir," said he, addressing his public secretary, "see that it be so, and lodge the instrument in the hands of my son."

The general feeling of approbation that now circulated through every heart relaxed a little, for the moment, the gloomy, silent respect which, until then, the spectators had preserved. An accla-

mation of thankfulness echoed through the apartment;—the duke waved his hand, and all was again silence. The sister of Desmond, who had fainted on the stern reply her application encountered, had been borne from the room, and the subject of Desmond's danger laid at rest amongst the guests, who secretly rejoiced, while they marvelled, at the result of the young Count's interposition.—Winterfeldt whispered,

"As your mediation may not always prove thus successful, I am glad it has not been wasted on a less important occasion; albeit, there is a culprit now in durance, whose claim, from your sense of justice, might perhaps have superseded that of poor Desmond—I mean Devereux."

"Devereux! And is Devereux then actually disgraced, and for giving me entrance this morning?"

"He is under a cloud, sir," said Winterfeldt, shrugging his shoulders: "he is only condemned to a week's meditation

in the dark, with a little abstinence; but, between ourselves, my Lord, Devereux will profit by the discipline. His Excellency has somewhat fostered his presumption—he has not calibre to carry so much favour. I trust your Lordship will forbear to interrupt his meditations."

Niemen, the secretary, who, in common with the rest of the Duke of Friedland's dependants, deprecated the untimely fate of poor Desmond, executed the formula of his pardon the moment he arose from table, and brought it to the audience-chamber, where Casimir stood contemplating the crowd of applicants, noble and simple, by whom his father was assailed, and whom that great man received with more dignity than benevolence. YoungVallensteïn was no sooner possessed of the important scroll than he hastened to quit the apartment, and the duke called after him, "Count, do not be late; I shall expect you in my cabinet before nine: we will sup in private."

As he descended the great staircase,

his pages and other attendants prepared to follow him; but, asking for his cloak, in which he wrapped himself, he signified his intention of going alone to the fortress. Winterfeldt, who stood at the bottom of the stair, seized his hand, and kissed it.

"My Lord," said he, "you are like a good angel amongst us! You revive within us the feelings of men! Positively we have been exhibited of late like the figures of some lifeless pageant, a piece of grim machinery,—our speech and motion depending solely on the will of one great mover;—but, dear Count, I am a petitioner to your goodness: let me attend you to the fortress. I have a personal interest in the man you have saved. My nephew loves his sister, and, I believe verily, would have died for the brother."

CHAPTER III.

"Be absolute for death; or death or life
Shall thereby be the sweeter!"

Shakspeare.

WHEN the Count and Winterfeldt arrived at the sorrowful abode of repentance and condemnation, many a ponderous bar was removed, and many a huge key grated in the lock, ere they reached the cell of the prisoner they came to liberate. From the hard and gloomy being who admitted them they learned that he had just parted from his confessor, and that an hour hence his sister, of whose fruitless application he had been apprized, would be allowed to confer with him a few minutes for the last time.

"I know not what ails me," said Casimir, as he approached the cell; "I feel as much agitated as if I was about to witness

the execution of this poor youth, instead of effecting his deliverance. Go in, Winterfeldt; I will remain for a moment without."

As the door heavily opened, the voice of the prisoner exclaimed, "Maria, I did not expect you yet! Ah! Winterfeldt, is it you? Have you the duke's permission? if not, begone! I will ruin no man but myself."

"Be satisfied, dear Desmond, my visit is licensed. Count Casimir of Vallensteïn arrived at Prague this morning, and interests himself in your fate, so that hope still glimmers."

"I am sorry for it," said Desmond; "it is Hope, that arrant cheat, that defrauds a man of his firmness; but I have done with her. My heart has been tossed like a foot-ball between her and her playfellow Fear, ever since the Duke's decree laid me in durance, but I have done with both. No, no, Winterfeldt, the pendulum is fixed,—no breath shall stir it more.

To-morrow will hardly bring a more effectual sedative: in fact, what is death but the annihilation of hope and fear? The pang passes when they die, and they are dead, I can tell you, Winterfeldt."

"Only a little stunned, perhaps."

"No," said Desmond gravely, "I have left off trifling with myself, and will permit no man to trifle with me. I have made up my short account with a good father who is just gone hence, and he has put more courage into me than ever I imbibed from the juice of the Hungarian grape. I am but a boy, Winterfeldt, and have never committed a much more heinous crime than that for which my soul is banished to the skies. It is my better angel, who, dubious to what amount this small sum might swell if I had time for sinning, will to-morrow assume the shape of an executioner, and sever my head from my body. I dare meet the hour, Winterfeldt; upon my soul, I do not shrink from it, and this is no time for gasconading; but

there is one pull yet,—I would that you, or your nephew, would prevail with Maria to spare it me—I dread my sister!"—and a tear sprang into his hollow eye.

"But you will see Count Vallensteïn, and hear how far his hope of your pardon is authorized?"

"I *must* see him, I suppose; but, for his errand, I would I might escape the persecution of it."

The Count at that moment appeared: "Excuse my intrusion, lieutenant, for the sake of its motive. My friend Winterfeldt has of course announced me; although, perhaps, he has not acquainted you that I hold from my father a warrant for some days respite, during which space who knows how much farther we may succeed in obtaining from him?"

"I thank you, my Lord," said the prisoner, in a firm and solemn tone, "but I reject the respite! I *will* die to-morrow!—at ten to-morrow,—so stands my sentence:—does it not, Winterfeldt?

Excuse me, Count, if I be found deficient in due courtesy; but my equipage waits, my credentials are sealed, and all is ready for my journey. I have a gulf to leap, and I will not stand trembling and shuddering on its brink."

"And do you positively reject my mediation, Mr. Desmond?"

"I do, my Lord. I respect the benevolence of your motives, but cannot consent to a renewal of my own suspense, even to gratify the goodness of your Lordship's heart. I *will not* be respited! I demand of the duke's justice either my death to-morrow, or my free pardon!"

"Will you at least consent to peruse this scroll, lieutenant?"

He presented it to him, and lowered the dim lamp which twinkled against the wall. The two first lines acquainted him that his pardon had been granted to the intercession of Count Casimir of Vallensteïn. A strong, deep flush suffused the prisoner's pallid cheeks; and, bent as he

was to die, life rushed back upon his heart in its full tide of hopes and promises. His ears rung with strange sounds, his eyes were dazzled, and his breast agitated with strong throbbings; he had awakened from a dream of death, and the transition was almost too powerful. He kissed the hand of his deliverer, but spoke not a word, for he could not speak. Winterfeldt, a soldier and a courtier, was drowned in tears, so irresistibly had this scene acted on his nerves. The gaoler was summoned, and the wrists and ancles of the prisoner released from their weighty fetters. Young Vallensteïn, as they quitted the fortress, observed that Desmond was dressed in the garment allotted to felons, and, with characteristic delicacy, threw his own pelisse over him. Arrived at the house inhabited by Desmond's sister, Vallensteïn bade "good evening" to him and Winterfeldt, and returned, laden with blessings, not loud but deep, to the palace.

"Upon my word, Count," said the duke, beholding him with a smile as he entered the cabinet, "I never saw a candidate for popularity bid fairer: your first essay has been admirable. You have one fault, however: your benevolence is spontaneous, and, if you would use it as an agent, it should be systematic; but I will not throw away good counsel on you—I believe you are inveterately good, and, such as you are, remain!" He sighed—"It is better to go on as we begin:—I do not like deviations; for, after all, consistency is greatness."

"I would you had been with me this evening, my father."

"I guess where you have been, Casimir. When I was your age, I should have enjoyed such a scene; but it will not do now."

"And why not, my father?"

"Because, my son, I am arrived at a point when I must fortify and steel my heart against all the intruding weaknesses of nature: I have long held a tough

struggle with these yearnings, but they are conquered, and I am not only master of others, but of myself! Never have I given such victorious proof of this mastery, as in the condemnation of Desmond.—You have had it whispered in your ear, no doubt, that his crime was merely nominal;—but, I am surrounded by a motley multitude, and there is pride and faction amongst them.—I wanted an example, and took the first which offered: since that hour there is not a heart amongst them that does not tremble at my voice. I know," said he, bitterly, "what it is to depend on gratitude and on personal affection—mere ties of silk; a babe can snap them. My bonds are of firmer materials."

"Alas! sir, and is this necessary—pardon me, if I add, is it just—thus to deal with men who have cast their fortunes in the same hazard with yours? Believe me, I regard them as a noble, devoted

band, proved and seasoned by your adversity."

"My dear Casimir, you are a child: they throng after me because I give them bread. Did I not make them men? And would they not crumble to nothing without my light and heat? I am the sun of their system; they cannot do without me. No one but you could have rescued Desmond, and I am dismayed at this proof of your sway with me:—you shall not stay with me long, or we shall have a schism; besides, I have need to employ the abilities of so crafty and subtle a statesman at the imperial court: so," added he, with an ironical smile, "you must represent me there. As you persist in believing in gratitude, and such matters, you shall take your client Desmond with you: he is become incapable of serving me: try if you can make any thing of him."

"I accept him, sir, thankfully, at your hands, and expect to have many oppor-

tunities of rejoicing in your present; but, sir, as I shall not long have the means of snatching a victim, now and then, from the paws of the lion, hear me acknowledge that I have one more boon to prefer, and then I will engage to tremble in silence with the rest."

The duke's countenance underwent an inauspicious change. "I foresaw this," said he:—"well, sir, what more?"

"My father, you have punished your page for my fault,—liberate him then at my entreaty. Are you not aware that his disgrace is mine?"

"Oh! Devereux," said the duke, smiling, "is that all? Well, provided here is an end of your interposition, let him out, by all means; but this mediation will add nothing to your popularity, count: Devereux is a favourite with me, and therefore with none else; he might have pined in his dungeon till doomsday without any one but yourself pleading his cause.—This hint will teach him not

to rely on his impunity—and that is sufficient."

"Shall I take *him* too to Vienna?"

"No: he is gentle and playful;—I keep him as one would a kitten, to divert me with his gambols, and relax my mind when it is overstretched;—he sits by my couch, and warbles me to sleep of nights. No,—I cannot spare Devereux; his prate is the only luxury I allow myself."

The father and son sate engrossed in friendly converse till the hour of twelve sounded; then the duke started with an air of perturbation: "Ha," exclaimed he, "is it so late? Good night, good night, Casimir;" and taking a taper, he hurried out; and, as young Vallensteïn quitted him at the door of the cabinet, he remarked that he bent his rapid steps through the long suite which terminated in the apartment where *he* had been so unseasonably introduced. As for himself, he proceeded to the hall, and addressing himself to the captain of the halberdiers

who held the night watch, required him to procure the key of the keep, resolved to release the unfortunate Devereux from his dreary captivity. He approached the dark den accompanied by the gaoler, with far different feelings from those which attended him to the prison of poor Desmond: he would scarcely perhaps have advocated the cause of Devereux, but for the share he had in bringing on him his penance.

"Why, surely," said he, as he reached the cell, "some one is with him."

"Oh, no, my Lord; he is only swearing and raving a bit—he has been like a madman ever since he was put there. Please your Lordship, its a pity but he was left to tame a little."

He was pacing about in his narrow den, and as the glare of the gaoler's torch broke upon the utter darkness, it served rather to dazzle than enlighten the prisoner.

"Oh, oh," cried he, "I thought the

old tyrant would want his song to-night; but he is mistaken if he thinks I shall forget him. I am in his debt, and the boy Devereux will be a man ere long. Ay, ay, the kitten's claws are growing."

The gaoler seemed to feel a malicious pleasure in hearing the favourite page thus expose himself, and was far from interrupting the pourings forth of his vexed spirit: in another moment, however, Devereux was aware of his rashness, and stood in all the trepidation of detection before his liberator, who, eyeing him gravely, said, "I fear, sir, my interference in your behalf has been most injudicious. It is quite evident you need time for reflection; so, good night, sir."

He turned to depart; but Devereux, who had not fortitude for darkness and privation, sprang after him, clung to him with the most importunate entreaties, assured him the words he had uttered were the mere sallies of boyish resentment; that he loved his master, and

would die for him. In short, he wept, prayed, and pleaded, till, with contemptuous compassion, Vallensteïn permitted him to issue forth, half ashamed of his own weakness in allowing himself to be so wrought on.

The following day at dinner the favourite was in close attendance on his master, presented his golden cup with recovered audacity, and appeared anxious to impress the minds of the guests that the sunshine in which he basked was brighter and warmer than ever for the temporary cloud. Winterfeldt whispered Vallensteïn to observe the presumption which every look and motion of Devereux betrayed. "In truth," returned the Count, "I repent of having opened the door of his prison."

"And when you are as conversant with his merits as I am, my Lord, your repentance will increase. Desmond has solicited permission to pay his grateful duty to the Duke this evening,—he has been sternly refused: and that would not have

been had yon little viper remained quietly in his hole."

"Is it possible?"

"It is true, my Lord—Devereux is a coaxing, winding, soothing, insinuating, little devil!—He looks all mildness and innocence, and chirps like any bird; but the urchin is full of spleen. Every act of mercy or favour that emanates from his great master seems to derogate from *his* pretensions, and he sets himself by all sorts of dexterous manœuvres to intercept or divert it."

"How old is he?" said the Count, fixing his eyes sternly on him as he asked the question. Devereux, aware of his look, and guessing he was the subject of animadversion, blushed bright vermilion.

"Why," rejoined Winterfeldt, "though he blushes, and smiles, and weeps, and curls his ringlets on his forehead like a girl, he is eighteen.—It is wonderous to reflect what a weight of enmity that pretty youth has accumulated for himself.

He has but one friend in Prague,—a mighty one indeed! But, methinks, I would not be the object of as much ill will for all the duke's favour."

Vallenstein's wrath was kindled to no slight pitch, at the thought of this minion daring to counteract in any degree the pardon of a man he patronized. As he followed his father to the audience chamber, Devereux inadvertently jostled him, and he pushed him off so rudely, that the page was startled.

"Make way, sir, and keep your own subordinate place."

Devereux humbly slunk behind. On entering the audience chamber,

"I hope," said the Duke to his son, "that thoughtful look bodes me no more petitions! But be warned in time; my mood is this day inflexible!"

"To say truth, my Lord, I am too conscious of the follies of yesterday to repeat them."

"What! has the lieutenant given you cause to repent your intercession?"

"No, sir: *he* was well worth saving."

"And what then has poor Devereux done to forfeit your good will?—But I need not ask—your mind has been poisoned against him: the marvel would have been, had you escaped the infection." And he cast a glance of no gracious meaning on those around—"Nay," added he, "I know the nature of men too well to be angry." And a contemptuous smile completed the sentence for him.

When the audience closed, the Duke took his son's arm, and passed into his cabinet, having ordered his secretary to be summoned.

"We must spend this evening," said he, "in preparing our despatches for the Emperor:—to-morrow, or, at farthest, the next day, you will set forth:—your train is already in attendance, and you shall enter Vienna with an equipage, such as neither of the Archdukes can emulate."

"You have, it appears, my Lord, somewhat anticipated my journey," said Ca-

simir, blushing with resentment at the suspicion which crossed him that the influence of Devereux had a share in this manœuvre.

"Why yes, my son, I will not dissemble with you—you are a fine, manly, warm-hearted fellow:—you will make a magnificent figure as my representative; but, to say truth, I see plainly that you are gloriously fitted for perplexing my plans, and thwarting my operations here; so I must for a time bestow you elsewhere.—Be not wounded, my son," said he, assuming a more serious tone, "you shall know me again as your parent:—at present all the powers of my mind are brought to a focus—all the feelings of my heart are expressed by one word—ambition!—My projects are vast, and so are my means of accomplishment:—and I know," said he solemnly, "I know that they *must* be accomplished, for fate is with me!"

As he uttered these words Niemen en-

tered, and the remainder of the evening was dedicated to diplomatic instructions and arrangements. The acuteness and subtlety in the art of state-craft, the deep knowledge of mankind, the infallible manœuvres for baffling, disarming, or inveigling an enemy, exhibited by the Duke on this occasion, as the whole arcana of this intricate science was laid open to the view of Casimir, was wonderful in his eyes, yet he shuddered to think of entangling himself in such a web, and secretly resolved to select, for his own use, such of the instructions he had received as best suited his conscience. As the hour waned, the Duke from time to time cast a glance at a clock which stood opposite to him, as if anxious not to trespass a second time on midnight. At length he rose. "Count Casimir," he said, "think well on what has passed—I know your genius, your inclination has no bias this way, yet I trust your affection, and that is a confidence I repose in no other hu-

man being.—Your demeanour is the chief matter;—be wary;—study a happy mixture of pride and pliancy;—insinuate yourself into the counsels of others, and preserve your own inviolate:—be penetrating and impenetrable."

CHAPTER IV.

"We go, it may be, to return no more,
Or, if we do return, we bring again
Only the form which we took hence with us:—
The hopes are perish'd, and the thoughts are fled,
And the affections frozen or exchang'd,
And, save the frame, it is another man,
Not him who hence departed!"

On the day appointed by Father Felix did the Baroness of Marchfeldt bid adieu to the towers of her fathers, her health being considered sufficiently re-established to enable her to undertake the journey to Vienna without risk. The recent shock had not passed, however, without leaving its traces; her cheek had lost its bright vermilion, and the very faintest tint of the rose now coloured it; and her mind, which had gradually recovered her brother's loss, was now relapsed into mournful thoughtfulness. To

Father Felix, and to Conrade, she had more than once named Wolfsteïn, but it was only to express the fear she could not help harbouring of his farther persecutions; the threat with which he quitted her presence having left a heavy foreboding of evil on her mind. Felix in vain endeavoured to console her with the assurance, that the languor left on her spirits by the severe malady from which she was scarcely recovered was sufficient to cause the gloomy misgivings which ever accompanied her recollection of the preceding events;—but no: she felt assured that Wolfsteïn would cast an inauspicious influence over her destiny:—it was no theme for argument; the mind was deeply imbued with one idea, and time and circumstances could alone deliver it from such oppression. The Baroness believed she should be safer in the crowded haunts of men.

"There, at least," said she, "his fearful image, which is incessantly menacing

my peace, will be driven away, for I will mix with the gay and the busy, and seek my companions amongst those who will assist me in the task of forgetting how cloudily my dawn has risen. If I can learn to forget, I may begin to hope."

Conrade, although far from encouraging the alarm of his lady, was extremely solicitous that her suite should be numerous and well armed; for, in his heart, he bore witness to the justice of her apprehensions. Barbara travelled in the same coach with her lady and Father Felix: the latter sate wrapt in his grey woollen mantle, his cowl covering his face, and absorbed as usual in deep meditation. The change he was about to encounter was almost as severe a trial as he could be called on to meet, for the world was no place for him, and the world's ways were not his ways; still he was convinced it was the sphere wherein the Baroness of Marchfeldt was born to move, and that it was his duty to follow and watch over

his charge wheresoever her destiny might lead her: when, therefore, he found the contrast his mind presented to him between the tranquil banks of the Raab and the tumultuous seat of empire too irksome to be dwelt on, he exchanged his reverie for his breviary; so that meditation and prayer almost wholly occupied him. Barbara alone looked with unmixed delight to the termination of the journey. She saw the world in prospect as a garden of roses, and cared not for the thorns;—in short, though a few kindly tears fell from her eyes as she received the embraces and admonitions of Justina, and shook hands with old Sigismond, the day on which she lost sight of the grey walls of Marchfeldt was entered on her tablet as the happiest she had ever seen. Albeit, this first day's progress was an indifferent earnest of the future for this volatile maiden, who deprecated the silence and reserve of her fellow travellers, without having skill or

assurance to break it, and the only interruptions it experienced took place at the different post-houses. The Baroness, to whom the gay temper of Barbara had often brought amusement in the solitude of her castle, was accustomed to allow this favourite maiden more familiar intercourse than any of her other attendants. As evening drew on she recollected, with some surprise, that the voice of Barbara had scarcely been heard during the day.

" My poor girl," said she, " I did not think to see you look so sad during a journey which has been in your breast the theme of so many splendid anticipations. You have observed a weary silence, and are no doubt preparing for your carnival by the severest of all possible penances."

" No, my lady, it is not altogether that which makes me look so sad, for I was just then thinking of something, which, if I did not fear to offend your ladyship, I fancy I ought to tell, and I was musing

how I should begin, and wondering whether I dared begin at all.

This exordium somewhat alarmed the Baroness, to whom the idea of Wolfsteïn was ever present.

"You do not want sense, Barbara; use it, therefore, in determining whether the communication you allude to is necessary or not."

"Why, my lady, I should not hesitate, but that I must needs mention a name which I know you do not like to hear."

"I do *not* like to hear it, Barbara; but, for Heaven's sake, conceal nothing connected with that name, of which it may concern me to be apprized!"

"For that matter, my lady, I am not *sure* I should be justified in offending your ear by uttering it, because I do not *know* that you were meant; but it is altogether so probable, that I think I can hardly be mistaken."

"Speak on then, Barbara; I am resolved to listen to you."

"You did not know, I dare say, my lady, that Rupert was very fond of your little French maid, Annette: he was always walking with her and talking with her, and they were to have been married, I believe, when—when,—but that's no matter. Well, my lady,—one night, when you were getting better, and I and Annette were sitting up watching in the ante-room, Annette, who has incessantly Rupert's name in her mouth, told me one of her stories which has never been out of my mind since.

"'When we lay in camp, at Halberstadt,' said he, 'a young nobleman joined the army. He was sad, and wan, and sickly, and mighty wilful and wayward, and they called him the spectre knight: he was a youth of great family, and great domains; he had one only sister, and if ever he did open his lips, which was but very seldom, it was to brag of her.' Now does it not stand to reason, my lady, that this could be

nobody but Lord Wilhelm—rest his soul!"

"Proceed, Barbara."

"Well, it went about the camp that the young knight was going out like the snuff of a taper, and then his beautiful sister would be heir to all his lands, and would be a worthy object of pursuit for any nobleman or captain, be he who he might; but amongst all the camp, two young lords determined to try their luck, and laid a wager with each other who should win the prize; but each was to take a different road, agreeing in nothing, save the pretence of violent mutual enmity. One resolved to attach himself to the young lady's brother, though alas, it was but like a vulture waiting by a dying lamb! Accordingly, he was inseparable as his shadow, rode by him in battle, watched him in sickness—nay, he went so far as to give up a great post in the army to him, knowing, a crafty knave, that he could not keep it from

him long. They freely exchanged the privilege of circumventing each other, and were just as good friends all the while, in their hearts, as if they had been playing any game where each was licensed to outwit and conquer his adversary. Well, my lady, the other young nobleman held his opponent's plan in contempt, and said any blockhead might have blundered on as good a one; besides, he thought there was something mean and unworthy in winding about a poor youth with such false pretences. 'Now,' said he, 'I shall go to work another way. Make me as hateful as you please to the spectre knight, so much the better. I will assist you! I will thwart him, and irritate him, and I will make it my business to impress his ductile mind with sinister thoughts concerning me. It shall be my aim to excite his wonder and inspire him with hatred. We will be his Arimanes and Oromasdes: a mere common-place candidate will prefer the

latter claim; I am well content with my chance of success.' 'And how,' inquired Annette, 'has the game ended?' 'Oh,' said Rupert, 'it is playing at this moment, and there may be many a puzzling move yet before it ends; but,' said he, 'I should hate to see that sneaking thief carry the prize, who kept fawning and clinging about the poor dying youth with every pretence of affection, while he was impatiently counting his hours for him! Besides,' added he, 'the other got weary of his frolic, and would have yielded to his adversary, only the lady's picture by a chance fell into his hands, and gave a new spur to his spirit, so that pure love is carrying on the plot, which self-interest, or rather the whim of the moment, began.' This is the story, my lady, as Rupert told it to Annette."

"Merciful powers!" exclaimed the Baroness. "Is it possible that such base and complicated treachery may find harbour in the breast of man?"

The Friar, who had closely attended

to Barbara's narration, groaned deeply: to him it brought a woful discovery. He had related to the Baroness the visit of Count Vallensteïn to the village—their conference in the chapel—the affliction he had testified for her illness—and, in short, every incident respecting him calculated, in his opinion, to excite an interest in her breast; but his intentions and his judgment were too often at variance: he was too precipitate, and should have waited to a more auspicious season. The affections of Louisa were not of a mutable and facile nature: she had loved Wolfsteïn tenderly and exclusively up to the moment of their sudden separation; and she now besought Heaven to release her heart entirely from so detestable a bondage. But such prayers sufficiently implied that the chain was yet to break; it was, therefore, no time for the introduction of a rival candidate to her favour; and to her confessor's suggestions on the subject she replied,

"What time may bring to pass, I

cannot pretend to foretel; but, at this moment, that half of the creation to which Wolfsteïn belongs is my abhorrence!—All, save you, my father!" added she with a smile; "for, however universal the taint, sure your bosom is spotless."

The exact operation of Barbara's story on the mind of her lady did not become immediately apparent; but her spirits revived, and, though she occasionally fell into her musing habits, she talked cheerfully with Barbara, and encouraged her to converse; a permission which was not disregarded. The secret of which that lively maiden had disburthened herself gave her consequence in her own eyes, and she was not slow in perceiving that it had done her no injury in those of the Baroness. The poor Friar pondered silently and intensely on the wickedness of mankind, and put up his inaudible thanksgivings to that Providence which had so early removed the tender Wilhelm, with the innocence of his heart

unviolated, from the world's pestilential atmosphere.

Evening was now closing in, and a courier was sent forward to the post-house, where the Baroness proposed to pass the night, to apprise the host of her approach. Conrade rode up to the coach, and informed his lady that, as the post-house could afford her but mean accommodation, and as the night was clear and moonlight, and she well defended from the cold, moreover as her suite was strong and numerous, he would recommend her travelling forward. He owned, however, in answer to her questions, that after passing the little inn, they must cross a wide moor, bleak and uninhabited, and extending several miles. The Baroness would have, nevertheless, adopted Conrade's opinion, but both Father Felix and Barbara discovered so much timidity that, in compassion to their scruples, she resolved to spend the night at the inn. When they reached it,

they found, indeed, that Conrade had by no means exaggerated its deficiencies in comfort; and, had they been under the guidance of a less powerful escort, it was a place well calculated for the engendering of dreary thoughts and foul suspicions. It was a desolate melancholy spot, standing on the edge of the wild heath before mentioned; not a tree or shrub grew near it, and its tottering walls, and rent roof, bore witness to the invasions of many a pitiless whirlwind, to which it had been an unsheltered victim. The miserable room into which the Baroness and Barbara were ushered as their lodging for the night, afforded free ingress, through various apertures, for all the winds of heaven; and the Baroness almost repented having yielded to the fears of her companions.

"My lady," said Barbara, shuddering with cold and disgust, "were you ever in such a place as this before? For my

part, I dare say many a one has been murdered here!"

"That is a very comfortable conjecture of yours, as well as a very charitable one to the wretched inhabitants of this dreary hovel. I trust you have no better ground for such a dark surmise, than the squalid poverty in which their lot is cast."

"Oh, my lady!—The holy St. Francis forbid! But poverty does not oblige people to look like this man and his wife. Poverty does not hinder the poor people at Marchfeldt from looking good-natured and honest; but this man, I cross myself whenever he comes in my sight. He has such huge glaring white eyes, and they are far from being an exact match; neither do they both look at once on the same object;—then, as if nature would fain hide such a piece of workmanship, she has overhung them with a pair of thick white eye-brows; but the oddest thing in his face is, that while his

forehead is contracted into a deep scowl, the corners of his mouth are bent upwards in a perpetual smile, so that he frowns with one end of his face, and sneers with the other."

"A most appalling portrait, indeed! But you are surely exercising your fancy in the invention of a countenance such as nature never created."

"Then, as for his wife, she looks as gaunt and hungry as a wolf in the winter!—She gave a keen glance at me, and looked as sharp as if she longed to eat me. Do you know, my lady, I could not help wondering, in my own mind, if it might not be probable that she is one of those creatures who are human in the day, and wolf at night. You have, no doubt, heard of a were-wolf, my lady?"

"Very probable truly, Barbara. Did ever foolish girl give up her imagination to such follies!"

"Well, my lady, I wish you would observe these people, and judge for your-

self. There are some children too about the house, but the devil himself (the blessed saints forgive me!) might be their own father; for such abominable imps did I never behold! Babes as they are, you may read volumes of malice in their little frightful faces! I declare, my lady, I can compare them with nothing but the ugly shapeless things that flitted about my bed, grinning and chattering, and pointing at me, when I had the fever."

The Baroness could not but be amused by the family picture, thus sketched for her entertainment by her garrulous attendant: yet, as she knew Barbara was a shrewd, intelligent observer, in spite of her volatile spirits, she inwardly congratulated herself on the strength of her retinue, which she hoped might bid defiance either to treachery or violence, should either be at hand. It was yet early, and the household were not disposed of. The host had allotted an apartment to Father Felix, if the narrow dark hole

which was to be his dormitory could claim such an appellation; and invited the remainder of the suite to take up their lodging, some in the stables with their steeds, and others in a ruinous out-building at some distance from the house. Conrade, who acted as head of the retinue, answered with indifference, that, wrapped in their cloaks, they cared not much for such moderate shelter as was offered them; and that, as exercise would keep them warm better than lying in a roofless hovel, he would resume his old post of sentinel, and march to and fro before the house; the others, meanwhile, except a few who chose to seek repose in the stable, had taken his hint, and would follow his example.

"It is a pity I have no better lodging to offer such a number of brave gentlemen," said the host, "I never was so vexed before; but I am thinking, as you are so many, you might spare above half your company, to push on towards So-

pron to-night. A finer moon never shone, and the stars sparkle like so many diamonds. Your horses are quite fresh by this time. I will give you a guide, who knows every inch of the moor, so you need not fear straying, though it is a wild waste, and might puzzle a stranger. The people at Sopron will detain you, if they have not good notice for preparation; you are too many for one inn, and will find it good policy to divide."

"Your advice is excellent, friend Sturmo," said Conrade, "but one night's watch will hurt neither me nor my comrades. What!—I have served under Vallensteïn, man. Do you think I value a few hours stargazing? We will send our courier forward to Sopron, as we did here, and shall find all ready for us, I doubt not."

"Well, gentlemen, as you please; it is your own business," said Sturmo sulkily; "but you may have nothing to say against a little additional warmth,

perhaps; I can give you a drop of famous mead, if that suits your fancy."

"Ay, ay, Sturmo, with all my heart."

In Sturmo went, and presently returned with the promised beverage, of which Conrade, and each of the suite who were standing about him, took a copious draught. The courier, who had arrived at this post-house an hour before his lady, had whispered a word in Conrade's ear, which satisfied him at once of the necessity of keeping his force concentrated. Loitering about the moor, he had passed a hollow, thick with furze; and, in passing it, heard a half suppressed sneeze: this furze covered nearly half an acre, and was therefore capable of concealing a formidable banditti. The courier, startled by a sound the source of which he perceived not, turned hastily, and his eye resting on the covert, he was aware that the neighbourhood was better peopled than he had suspected; he, however, assumed an unconscious air, and

went whistling forward, though the hard beating of his heart scarcely left him breath to make up his music; and a happy man was he when the carriage wheels and clattering hoofs announced the approach of his lady and her company. Conrade prudently resolved not to alarm the Baroness or the confessor, whose personal courage he perhaps underrated, by relating the discovery Uthred had made. He, however, called a council of his fellows, as to the preferable mode of proceeding; and it was agreed, that since they were prepared against any surprise, there was no more danger in remaining stationary, than there would be in crossing the moor.

Sturmo, with a bundle of fagots, entered the apartment where the Baroness and Barbara, wrapped in their pelisses, were cowering over a brasier, and trying to fan some feeble embers into a more kindly blaze. The arrival of the fagots was welcomed by each; but, as the Ba-

roness looked on him who bore them, her blood ran cold, for a more villanous aspect never met her gaze. Light and warmth are, however, excellent revivers of courage, and these he brought them. The Baroness felt curious to ascertain if her host's voice corresponded with his aspect, and asked him if he had many children, and if he found his occupation sufficient to maintain them.

"Ay," said he, in an accent like the shriek of the night raven, "I have three little famished imps to feed, and had I no better occupation than the one you see, lady, I must be fain to choke them, one after another, and dig a hole for them in the next bog."

"And what, my friend," said Barbara, "may your other business be?"

"Oh," replied he, looking sidelong at her under his heavy brows, "only a little matter of partnership." And he quitted them.

"Now confess, madam," said Barbara,

" that you never saw a more unpromising physiognomy than that of our host."

" It is sufficiently so to make me shudder at heart!—I am weary, very weary, but I would not sleep for the world! Tell me some of your stories, Barbara, and keep me waking,—I give you license to talk all night."

" Well, my lady, shall I tell you sad stories or merry ones? Did you ever hear the history of the Princess Agnes of Hapsburg, properly called St. Agnes, who, when she saw the soldiers tossing infants on their pikes, cried, 'Now I bathe in May dew?'"

" Nay, pr'ythee, good girl, select thy subject better! Let us have nothing that can increase the gloom of this place."

" Did you ever read how Pope Sixtus V. frightened his physician to death, by snapping at his fingers?——Oh! the eleven thousand virgins be about us!" screamed she, " what is that?"

The sudden shriek and terrified gesture

of Barbara, and the fixed gaze with which her eyes were directed to a spot immediately behind the Baroness, caused the latter to turn, when she beheld the gypsey of the wood of Mornau glaring on them through an aperture in the wall, where was a wooden lattice which opened from without, and, as both the present inmates of the apartment were ignorant of its existence, the apparition was doubly unaccountable and appalling.

"Why!" cried the hag, with her usual hideous grin, "you hardly expected me, sure! Do you always greet an old friend thus?—What! the wolf has dropped his prey this time! Beware the next! Beware the next!"

And, with an air of diabolical enjoyment in the almost deadening terror she occasioned, she closed the lattice, and disappeared. For many minutes the Baroness and her attendant sate gazing on each other, in silent and shuddering alarm; the latter at length sprang from

her seat, and by diligently stirring the fagots, and trimming their small lamp, augmented, as much as lay in her power, the light of the comfortless chamber, and began chafing the hands of her pallid, trembling, half-frozen lady, and speaking comfort to her.

"Oh Barbara!" said the Baroness at length, "I am sick with terror! Would Conrade were here! I should then feel more secure.—But how shall we find him?"

Barbara, with all her flippancy, wanted neither zeal nor resolution where her lady was concerned, and in the midst of her own share in the terror the recent apparition had excited, she was yet more distressed by a sense of the danger such alarms might create, for one so lately risen from the bed of sickness; she said therefore in a soothing tone,

"My lady, if you dare permit me to look out, I will seek Conrade, and bring him to you; if I find not him, I shall

surely meet some of our people: at all events, I will not be absent a moment."

"Kind Barbara!" said the Baroness, languidly, "I could not ask it. But if you have the courage, go, dear girl; I shall feel security in Conrade's presence."

She found the trusty domestic folded in his camp cloak, centinel-like, marching to and fro before the door, drowsily humming a military tune.

"Ah!" said she, transported at the sight of him, and casting a comparative glance on the forms of some of his comrades, who lay fast asleep on the ground, "one may be sure, whatever other lazy varlets there may be, you, Conrade, are ever to be found on the watch. My lady wants you.—Why, bless me! You stare as if you had lost your wits, and look so drowsy! Do, pray, come to my lady! She's dying with fright! Oh dear! How *can* you stand, like something stupid!"

"Oh! my lady!—Ay, ay, now I un-

derstand you! I see it all at once! Ah! now I have it! Well, it is an excellent joke that I should fancy all the while I was keeping guard before my young lord's quarters at Halle! Ay, ay, I'll attend my lady.—To be sure; I'll attend my lady directly!"

And, moving himself with no great celerity, he followed Barbara. The Baroness, who had kept her eye steadily fixed on the glowing embers in the brasier, fearful to hazard a glance round the apartment, now rushed to meet the man in whose protection she so confidently relied, but all sense and judgment had apparently forsaken him; the transition from the keen frosty air to light and heat completed his overthrow, and, in spite of every effort put in practice by the Baroness and her woman to arouse him, he sank down in the corner, and was soon stretched in almost deathlike slumber.

CHAPTER V.

"Passato il pericolo, gabbato il Santo!"

The consternation of the Baroness was now at its height; there was no alternative but to sit patiently, expecting the slow departure of this tedious, fearful night: Barbara, who had been ready to embrace Conrade, in the character of her protector, now beheld him with feelings of wrath and animosity.

"A precious guard, indeed! Such a lazy, drunken fellow! A lovely figure he'll make in the morning! Were I him, after such an exploit I would hang myself!"

"This is so strange and unwonted an event in Conrade's history, that I cannot look on it as the effect of accident:—In short, I know not what to think! Would that this weary night were passed!"

It must have been sometime after midnight, when the door softly opened, and Sturmo looked in upon them ; his glance wandered round the room, as if in search of something, and the inquiry seemed to obtain a satisfactory answer, when he espied the situation of Conrade.

"What is your business, friend?" said the Baroness, timidly.

"I thought you might need some attendance, ladies; but I see you are so well guarded and served, I might have spared myself the pains.—Do you always keep vigil, ladies? You will tire of that plan, if you travel far. Let me bring you a drop of warm mead to comfort your hearts, and then, wrapt in those cloaks, you may sleep by the fire as sound as on a feather-bed! *Do*, ladies?" added he, in a whining tone, "such pretty, slight creatures as you are, cannot make too much of themselves."

There was an insolence about the man, against which the spirit of the Baroness,

subdued as it was by fatigue and agitation, revolted.

"Retire, friend!" said she, "we do not need your services! Only do me the favour to send hither the first of my domestics you meet with."

"Why, lady, it happens rather unluckily, but the truth is, that the gentleman in the corner there is a sample of all the rest. There is not one of your domestics whose own legs will carry him to you; there they lie, some at the door, and some in the stable, like so many dead men: if you don't believe me, you may come and see yourself, lady. Nay, you may well turn pale, for it has an evil look with it, there is no denying; and how it has all happened, unless the devil has been amongst us, I can't pretend to guess. Hark, ladies! Don't you hear something?"

"Oh!" cried Barbara, "my teeth chatter so, I can hear nothing but them!"

"No, no!" said Sturmo, "it is not the chattering of *your teeth* I hear—but do listen!"

The Baroness plainly distinguished the buz of many voices, and no longer entertained the shadow of a doubt as to the danger of their situation; collecting all her strength, she fixed her eyes steadily on Sturmo.

"Yes!" she said, "I *do* hear sounds, and I comprehend their meaning! We have fallen into evil hands; your poverty, perhaps, has led you into a connivance with the wicked, but deliver us from danger, and you shall be both rich, and innocent, of *this* crime at least. Here," said she, offering a purse of gold, "here is an earnest that you shall not lose by saving us."

"Well," replied he, "it would be a great comfort to a man's conscience, to be sure, to save two such pretty ladies, and gain such a purse as this into the

bargain;" at the same time concealing the bribe in his bosom, "so, I'll see what I can do."

"Ay!" cried Barbara, with clasped hands, "dear good creature! If he saves us, he will be an angel, in spite of his ugliness!"

"He will *not* save us, Barbara!" said the Baroness, despondingly, "the malice of his heart is too legible on his countenance! No, I have no hope, save in Providence, for there is nothing human at hand to help us."

"Then, if that's the case, we must look to ourselves, and I'll try, at least, if I can't make a cut at them, before they shall lay a finger upon you."

And, springing on Conrade's sabre, she, with great dexterity, unfastened the belt, and in the next moment drew it from its scabbard.—Sturmo re-entered, and Barbara held the weapon, with which she had armed herself, behind her.

"Lady," said he, addressing himself

to the Baroness, "here has been a fuss about nothing, after all. A few poor Zingari—harmless people, my lady, just want to read your ladyship's fortune for you. Give them but their own way; there is no danger in them:—I have no better friends in the world, so I can't think of contradicting them, be it how it will."

Four or five of this wild tribe immediately poured after him into the room, and, by their barbarous dialect and rude gestures, seemed to invite, or rather command the Baroness to follow them.

"You had best comply, lady," said Sturmo, "they'll not injure you; and besides, there is no help for you.—You will find them ten times civiller, if you go of your own accord; and, as for crying out and struggling, it's a jest—only giving yourself so much useless trouble."

The Baroness, half distracted with terror, recoiled shrieking, when two of these ferocious beings seized each a hand, and

dragged her towards the door; then Barbara, who, in their eagerness to secure a principal object, they had apparently neglected, rushed after them, and with desperate energy made a stroke at the arm of one of the Zingari who held her lady, and inflicted so deep a wound, that he was obliged to let go his grasp, uttering a hideous howl. In a moment the room was filled with curses and imprecations, accompanied by dreadful threats of revenge; and Barbara, exhausted by the one powerful effort she had made, was instantly disarmed, and would have been sacrificed without mercy to the vengeance of these wretches, but at that critical juncture, the lattice opened, and the face of the Hag of the Wood of Mornau was again visible.

"Quit your prey, and escape!" said the hoarse, rough voice, "the hounds are upon you!"

No second admonition was waited for. Ere they could believe themselves awake

and alive, the Baroness and her faithful Barbara were delivered from their tremendous assailants, and the nearer and nearer echo of a horn, indicating the approach of travellers, encouraged them to hope that their danger was indeed, and effectually, averted. Conrade meanwhile, in spite of the confusion which had clamoured around him, lay stretched in the nook where he had first deposited himself, a lifeless log. Barbara flew to her lady, embraced and wept over her, but, save some faint and fervent ejaculations of gratitude to Heaven for their deliverance, neither spoke, for their faculties were nearly overwhelmed by the shock they had experienced. Again they shrieked and clung closer to each other as the door burst open, and two gentlemen burst wildly into the room.

"Merciful Heaven be thanked!" exclaimed one of them, "they are safe!"

The sight of these strangers, and the consciousness of safety their appearance

inspired, aroused Barbara from her trance of terror, and she began, with all the volubility of nervous trepidation, to relate what had happened, intermixing her narrative with tears and exclamations.

"But," said the stranger, with fearful eagerness, "are you indeed both safe? That horrid blood-track which led us to this room almost shook my reason."

"It appears, my lord," observed his companion, "that the ruffians must have met with some resistance—but from whom?"

Barbara shuddered as she reflected on her own exploit, and wanted courage to confess that the blood which had so appalled them was drawn by her hand.

"It is very strange, Desmond, that not a single creature is to be seen about this place, except some fellows who lie scattered on the ground, as if in deadly slumber! The villain who keeps this

house, and his whole family, all, have disappeared !"

"And yet, my lord, however skilfully they have commenced their retreat, they will hardly make it good. If they are material men, they cannot vanish, and this heath affords no shelter. Our myrmidons will presently return from their gallop, and then we shall, you may depend on it, hear news of the ruffians."

"Gentlemen," said the Baroness, struggling to recover herself, "under Heaven, you are my deliverers! Every hope had died within me when your providential rescue arrived—and my poor Barbara! they would have murdered her!

"Infernal demons!" exclaimed both the strangers; "but you surely *are* wounded, then! It *must* be *your* blood we saw! No one defended you, according to your own report, all your domestics having had some soporific drug administered to them, yet there is a track of blood, fresh and vivid, from this door

to that which leads from the house—whose can it be?"

"Really," said Barbara, with an hysteric burst, "it is very hard to hear of nothing else! If you *must* know, gentlemen, I may as well tell you at once, that it came from the arm of one of the wretches who were dragging away my lady; and were it to do again, I would do it again; nay, I would have killed him if I could,—and I care not who knows it."

"You, lady!" said Desmond, looking on the little delicate form of the black-eyed maiden in astonishment, "were you really capable of so courageous an act? But, surely you dream! However resolute your zeal might be, you do not possess the means of inflicting such a wound!"

"I *had* the means, though; and look at my pelisse, if you doubt it."

It was steeped in the blood which had spouted from the man's arm, and Bar-

bara, assured by the look of admiration and encouragement she received from the strangers, proceeded to explain the use she had made of Conrade's sabre, which was wrested from her hand the moment she had struck the blow. Meanwhile, the Baroness expressed no small terror at the non-appearance and quiescence of Father Felix, through a night of such alarm: the stranger who seemed the superior in rank immediately offered to search for him, with the consolatory observation, that he was almost certain he had heard his voice when he first entered the house, but such was his own dismay and confusion at that moment, that he could not determine whence it proceeded. As he quitted the room, Barbara approached the Baroness and whispered,

" My lady, I thought I had seen that man before, and now I am sure of it: or else, how should he know his Reverence's voice? It is the very same person

I saw in the chapel, the night after your ladyship was taken so ill, and he was going mad about it."

"What!" cried the Baroness, starting, "Count Casimir of Vallenstein! It is very strange!"

At that moment her joy in beholding the Friar superseded all other reflections. The poor old man was trembling and agitated, having suffered all the misery of consciousness that his beloved ward was exposed to some danger, which he was neither permitted to share, nor to exert his little strength in attempting to defend her from. He had entered the dark hole allotted as his dormitory with no intention to spend the night in it, but merely for the purpose of exercising his devotions in private. As they were not remarkable for their brevity, an hour or two rolled away unperceived by him, and when he did arise from his knees, his consternation was great in discovering that he was a pri-

soner. His cell had been barred without, and after having in vain wearied himself with appeals to those whose footsteps he heard from time to time, he resigned himself as well as he could to that for which he knew no remedy, though maugre his meek and gentle temper, he became nearly frantic when his ears were assailed by sounds of tumult mingled with female shrieks, which brought the horrors of the night to their climax. What had passed totally obliterated from his thoughts the conversation of Barbara on the preceding day, and he beheld the hero of the hour with unalloyed joy and gratitude. It was not exactly so with the Baroness; his critical appearance was in her mind a source of suspicion and perplexity; she was possessed with the idea that her peace and tranquillity had been, and would be the mere sport of two self-interested adventurers, that even the dangers of the past night might be a mere pageant, invented to assist an art-

ful scheme, by him who appeared so opportunely as her deliverer. Imbued with this suspicion, she resolved warily to note whatever passed, and her dread of becoming the dupe of deliberate treachery had acquired a very predominant influence in her heart. Desmond now quitted the apartment to give orders and make all necessary arrangements for leaving this desolate spot, and for proceeding on the journey.

"I believe," said the Baroness, "it is the Count Casimir of Vallensteïn to whom I am indebted for a rescue from a most appalling situation. Your arrival at the precise moment when our last hope had expired was little less, methinks, than miraculous."

"It is the natural effect of a very powerful cause, lady," replied Casimir, blushing, for the grave emphasis of the Lady of Marchfeldt's countenance abashed him, he knew not why.

"True!" said Father Felix, "it does,

indeed, appear miraculous, for, now I think of it, how came you hither? I thought you were at Prague, or, perhaps, travelling from Prague to Vienna; but this is the last place I should have dreamed of meeting you in."

"Yet, it was a dream that brought me hither."

"What," cried the good Father, hastily crossing himself, "were you warned of our danger in your sleep? This is verily a manifest interposition."

"You mistake me, holy Father," said the stranger, smiling, "it is the universal dream, the reveries of hope, to which I allude. I expected to meet you at Vienna, and finding you not arrived there, as my credentials could not be delivered immediately, I set off incog. with my friend Desmond, and a small but resolved retinue, and, had I not met you here, should have proceeded as far as the banks of the Raab. We have travelled with great rapidity, for, should

my father discover that I had thus indulged my restlessness, he would resent it as a boyish frolic, unworthy the gravity of his representative."

"Pardon me, my Lord, if I confess," said the Baroness, "that even after your explanation, there seems to have been something so vague and indeterminate in your motive, that I can easily imagine the Duke of Friedland, acute and penetrating as he is, might consider it unaccountable."

"However weak and presumptuous, Madam, may have been the motives which actuated me, I can never cease to thank God for the result to which they have led me."

"Strange to say," said Desmond, entering, "our myrmidons are returned, and have found no trace of the enemy. If your business, my Lord, would permit us to loiter, I would not desire better amusement than to blockade the villains, for somewhere at no great distance they

must be lurking, and we should have them at discretion in a day or two I dare swear. But we have at least relieved a garrison. Some of the Lady of Marchfeldt's people were barricadoed in the stable with the horses. They had a share of the sleeping potion, but are shaking off the effects, and some of them begin to bestir themselves."

"Madam," said the poor disconcerted Vallenstein, dejectedly: "may I presume to suggest the expediency of your setting forward to Sopron. Conrade and those of your suite, who have not aroused from their lethargy, might follow you, either on to Vienna, or, should you deem it proper to await them there, to Sopron. Desmond, my dear fellow, you can remain and bring them forward. The remainder of your escort, Madam, and the principal part of my own, will, I flatter myself, be sufficient for your protection, should any farther danger arise, which is not probable."

"Ay, my child," said Father Felix, "it is a very secure and rational arrangement, and, if you please, we will instantly adopt it."

Poisoned as was the mind of the Baroness, the unfortunate proposal to divide her suite and throw herself chiefly into the guardianship of that of the Count, struck her at once as most palpable conviction. Her eye, for a moment, paused disdainfully on him who made it.

"Conscious, sir, as you are," said she, "of the depth and nature of my obligations to you, you will deem them ill repaid I fear, if I most peremptorily decline proceeding without that man," pointing to Conrade, "and his fellows. The situation to which my enemy, whoever it may be, has found it necessary to the success of his plot to reduce that brave and faithful domestic, evinces very plainly their sense of his fidelity."

Stung by the strange contempt and doubt in which he perceived himself

held, the heart of Casimir quivered as if a quick gliding arrow had pierced it; his colour went and came, and he stood for a moment speechless.

"With the faith and truth of Conrade I am well acquainted," he replied. "It was my pride to act as his fellow servant to one for whom I would have died: in the present instance I did not aspire to supersede his services, but only to act for a short period as his representative."

The mention, hypocritical as she conceived it, of her poor duped Wilhelm brought her indignation to its acme.

"Your talents, my Lord," said she, coldly, "must not be so wasted. I cannot consent to it. You have a much more befitting part to fill; but, I am faint and exhausted, and cannot argue."

"Am I then to conclude," asked the Count, timidly, "that the Baroness of Marchfeldt deems me unworthy to ride in her suite?"

"On that point, sir, I am passive.

Consult your pleasure. Only I am resolved to await the recovery of my attendants."

"I think, sir," said Desmond, "we had best carry this fellow into the open air, its sharp touch will revive him sooner than any thing."

Even this natural proposition was a subject of mistrust, and the Baroness whispered the Friar to accompany the two gentlemen who bore Conrade forth, and watch how they dealt with him. It is needless to say he suffered no injury at their hands. The shrewd blast soon restored him to consciousness, and his surprise, as his opening eyes fell on the Count, and the consternation and regret with which he heard the events of the night briefly detailed, may better be imagined than described.

"No, never, never again can I face my Lady! She *may* forgive, for her nature is kind and gentle, but she can never trust me more."

"Fear not, Conrade," said Vallenstein, mournfully, "she is grateful for your past services and confident in your future ones. You have no pardon to solicit, no rebuke to apprehend. She but awaits your recovery to proceed on her journey,—go show yourself to her. Ah!" he exclaimed, as Conrade obeyed her injunctions, "she will speak kindly to *him*, and perhaps smile upon *him*. Oh Desmond, how are my sanguine hopes defeated! How have I deserved her hatred?"

"Truly, my lord," said the lieutenant, "it seems to me that the evil and the remedy lie close in the same shell. Forgive me, sir, but if *you* did not catch the infection from her imperious ladyship, *I did*, for never in my life did I feel my indignation more completely excited!—If it had not been for her pretty little black-eyed woman, I should have been tempted to regret that our officious interference deprived her of leisure for

studying the Moldavian jargon; and positively her reception of her deliverer would lead one to conclude she thought the Zingari the least impertinent intruders of the two. I beseech your lordship, do not accept her permission, so ungraciously accorded, to attend her to Vienna. Her suite are all recovered; she can do without us. Do, I implore your lordship, recollect who you are."

"Recollect, Desmond! I would I could forget myself, and her, and all the world!"

"A hard gallop, my lord, will do you good, believe me. It will answer ten times better than drawling after this peerless lady's litter.—Pray let us be gone!"

"Do not distract me, Desmond!" cried Vallenstein, turning fiercely upon him. "Neither you, nor any man living, shall dissuade me from my purpose. You may think me infatuated—call me madman!—I care not. Less in

harmony with myself it is out of your power to make me!"

At this juncture Conrade came forth, cheered and comforted by the reception he had met from his lady, and proclaimed his orders for the immediate preparation of her equipage.

"How, sir!—Does she then honour me with no message?—Does she not even vouchsafe to inform me that she is on the point of setting out? Desmond, you are right!—No: an ideot—the most abject slave that breathes—would revolt at such treatment!"

"No doubt, sir," said Conrade, staring, "there is some mistake!—Shall I return to my lady?"

"No, no, sir," said Vallensteïn impatiently, "go and attend to your business—you, who cannot do wrong!"

"And I, my lord," cried the lieutenant, "will fly to order our steeds, and get our people mounted, that we may be off without delay." For he was glad at

heart that the neglectful insolence of the Baroness had at length provoked the gall of Casimir.

"I see, sir," said the latter, "that you lay hold of every word I utter that suits your purpose: but do not suppose I shall be drifted about like a wreath of snow in the wind. No, sir! I *said* I would attend the Baroness, and I *will* attend her."

"Very well, my lord: no man presumes to dictate to you."

"They had better not, sir! dictation suits me at no time, and at this moment the merest attempt at it is beyond sufferance!"

The phlegmatic Desmond shrugged his shoulders, and looked on his friend with pitying forbearance. Little more time elapsed ere all was ready; the Baroness came forth, led by the good confessor, and attended by Barbara; she was pale, languid, and exhausted. Vallensteïn sprang to the side of the coach,

and aided to support her as she ascended the step: that she did not forbid his assistance somewhat consoled him; he had held her hand in his too for an instant. But, alas! for poor Casimir!—all this proceeded rather from the quiescence of a subdued spirit, than from any mental consent; yet it served a little to sweeten the hitherto bitter food of his ruminations, for nothing can maintain itself on lighter food than a lover's hope. He contrived likewise to amuse himself with the following dogma of his own invention:—

"The love I bear this woman is certainly created in my heart for some specific purpose: such a powerful and pervading principle would never have been born merely to die of frustration! Besides," thought he, "could I, even by a wish, eradicate her image from my soul, I am not sure if this torment be not preferable to the cold and cheerless calm which would follow."

Such sophisms fully employed his cogitations, and he was satisfied, at least for the present, that it was advisable to love on, even in his predicament.

"For," said he, "without love life is objectless! What signify wealth or greatness?—Some one must share them with me, or I should hate them."

As his musings took a gentler turn, he thought on poor Desmond, and was assailed with shame and remorse, for the petulance with which he had treated him. He observed that the lieutenant kept aloof; and the idea that he had hurt the feelings of one who was, in a manner, incapable of retorting, grieved him sincerely.

"What must he think of me?—What can he think, but that I am a narrow-souled fellow, devoid of delicacy and generosity? Poor Desmond! I have outraged his feelings, and he, meanwhile, believes it incumbent on him to bear it patiently."

He checked his horse, till the lieutenant came up with him, but looked in vain in his countenance for the smothered resentment he expected to find in it.

"Dear Desmond," said he affectionately, "I have recovered sense enough to deprecate most sincerely the hasty impertinence of my conduct, and to thank you for your forbearance."

"The truth is, my lord, I class intoxication, madness, and love, together; and the words of a man, under any of these influences, should never be considered resentfully. Besides," added he, more seriously, "I am persuaded that Lieutenant Desmond is the very last man in existence to whom you would address a wounding word!—but let us wave such punctilio. My life is your gift, and I am bound to you for it; but I own it is a secondary consideration; and if, at any hour, I conceived my honour in jeopardy, I should think myself justified

in defending it, even against my life's preserver. Under these feelings have I fearlessly attached myself to your fortunes, and I trust you will find I have discretion enough to steer my way between the opposite extremes of servility and captious tenacity."

Content with this explanation, the two friends rode on together, till the cavalcade halted at Sopron; but, as the whole remaining journey was performed without the intervention of any striking adventures, it is sufficient to record of it, that it terminated at Vienna, after having occupied a reasonable space of time, and afforded, on its course, little or nothing which might justify Casimir Vallensteïn in the entertainment of more promising calculations.

CHAPTER VI.

"Oh, polish'd perturbation! Golden care!
That keeps the ports of slumber open wide
To many a watchful night!"

For the first few days after their arrival at the seat of empire, Louisa of Marchfeldt was necessarily employed in ordering her household, by the aid and advice of her uncle of Erdenheïm (towards whom she was anxious to make reparation for her seeming neglect, by every demonstration of respect and observance) and in preparing her court equipage, and habits of ceremony, matters in the importance of which it was the business of this experienced courtier to instruct her. Baron Erdenheïm was a kind, good man, a pious Catholic, and a loyal subject. There were who accused the Baron of superstition, both in religion

and politics, because he was somewhat childishly addicted to that which in each was merely extrinsic. He had a large and valuable collection of bones, from the thigh bone and shoulder blade to the toes and fingers of the blessed martyrs, collected at a prodigious, but worthily incurred, expense; and no antiquary ever contended with half the zeal for the genuine character of a rusty Otho, as would Erdenheïm for the identical splinter of the cross, which he ever bore about him in his golden reliquary. With regard to his earthly master, nothing could exceed his precision in matters of ceremony, and the unseasonable omission of a bow was, in his apprehension, a species of treason; but, let it not be believed, that in thus "tything mint and cummin," he neglected "the weightier matters of the law." No, there was not a shadow of hypocrisy in the formal observances of this nobleman; his zeal might betray him into puerilities, but it was a pure and honest zeal: the satirists of the

court might convert it into ridicule, but the moralists, if such there were, could never have found aught that was impeachable in it; and Ferdinand, to whom the throne had not been a couch of roses, had reason to know that whichever way the blast blew, whoever wavered, or whoever deserted, the shock which loosened others from his side would draw this old and faithful servant only the closer, add to the number and profoundness of his bows, and mingle somewhat of tender respect with his obsequiousness. Ferdinand would have looked in vain to the head of Erdenheïm for aid; to his heart an appeal was always anticipated, and he was become absolutely necessary to his master; a habit which could not, without pain or inconvenience, be dispensed with.

Count Casimir of Vallensteïn now resolved seriously to occupy himself in the fulfilment, with certain reservations, of his noble father's instructions.

"I will," said he to Desmond, "plunge

myself in politics, and bend all my faculties to the accomplishment of that great man's views. What! shall I sit still and resign myself in abject idleness to a mere idea?—For what else, after all, is love? A caprice!—An absurd prejudice of the fancy! And shall a being of nerve and intellect submit himself, with his eyes open, to more than Egyptian bondage?"

"Why, my lord, I would not be the man to speak in such undervaluing terms of that little ape, that "scaltro pargoletto," Cupid, for a trifle; but as your lordship is pleased to give me my cue, I will confess that every thing I have read or heard of the young gentleman favours the supposition, that one of his principal jests lies in baffling the progress, lessening the dignity, and darkening the fame of those whom nature intended should stand foremost among their fellows. Now, as I am an enemy to his power, at least unwilling that, under certain circumstances, he should maintain any foot-

ing at all in a manly bosom, I would hope, that with you the matter might be optional. As long as the varlet behaves civilly, and sings and harps you to sleep, as Devereux does his Excellency, I can comprehend the compact by which he holds his place: but his music has a different effect on your slumbers, I fear."

"The fact is, Desmond, the whole business has been laid in prejudice. I fancied I *must* love this one woman, and therefore, without waiting to compare or examine, fell straight in love with her! Last night, as I lay pondering the subject, I was struck with the conviction that this is the whole of the mystery."

"Well, my lord; having found the root of the evil, you fell asleep immediately, I make no doubt."

"No, Desmond, not exactly that; for I thought it best to meditate on the measures it might become me to adopt; for instance, as it became clear to me that my foolish fancy for the Baroness is

founded on no superiority in her; and that the Empress's circle may abound in many lovelier women than the scornful beauty who has caused me this temporary vexation, I can, you know, Desmond, solace myself, by forming an attachment to one of these: I cannot for my life help thinking she must feel that —eh, Desmond?"

"Alas! my dear Count, you are still deluding yourself with the hope that she partakes your passion; otherwise, how can you expect her to feel it? It may pique her pride, but it cannot touch her heart. Besides, if you really succeed in transferring your affections, what signifies to you what she thinks or feels?—You have too much generosity to triumph in mortifying a woman."

"I am not sure of that, Desmond. Oh! I feel such bitterness against her! I am glad I hate her, however—are not you, my friend?"

"Why, Count, to be candid, I would

rather see you quite free from the ague, neither burning in its hot fit, nor freezing in its cold one. I have seen the disease before, and know too well you will keep alternating between these two extremes."

"Desmond, I am not so tame-blooded as you suppose me. No, no; you have yet to learn my disposition!—But this then is not the first time you have seen a man slighted by the woman of his heart, or rather of his fancy. Tell me, dear Desmond, what was the sequel?"

"The result, my lord, is the emancipation of a brave lad's heart from most contemptible thraldom," said the lieutenant, blushing. "I was the patient!—My pretty little Ella superseded my reason, and governed instead thereof; and, during her reign, the little kingdom of man was in a state of total subversion—the winds blew at once from the four quarters of heaven, and there was one eternal transition from fair to stormy—from cloudy to sunshine. I can only compare my situ-

ation to that of some unfortunate fellow caught in the vortex of a whirlpool, the passive victim of its sport. Sometimes, like your lordship, I plumed myself on my hatred of Ella. Alas! it was only the bitterness of insulted love.—But to come to the catastrophe. Exulting in my humiliation, my fair tyrant exacted each day new proofs of it; and finding that, on one occasion, I had been appointed expressly by the Duke to a particular duty, she thought proper to make my breach of his command the test of my affection. 'It is,' said she, 'my gala day; if you are absent at such a time, blame me no more for any mark of favour I may bestow on your more assiduous rivals;—make me this trifling concession, or take the consequences.' I made an unhappy choice between the duke's displeasure and the frown of a cruel, capricious woman! The following morning found me a prisoner, with a speedy promise, however, of soon escaping from all my fetters, for the Duke

paused not an instant on my sentence; and such was my weakness, that I felt it a privilege to die for Ella. I was permitted, from time to time, to see my sister, and thought it strange that she bore me no message, no token of pity and tenderness, from her for whose sake I suffered. 'How,' said I, 'does Ella support this stroke?' 'Forget her, my brother! Think of her, speak of her, no more; she is dead for you—she is married!' 'Ella married!—Impossible!—She cannot be so base!' 'She *is* married—married to that fop Zartowitz!' 'And this,' said I, 'is the purchase of a brave man's life!—One false smile! And has she no remorse? Can she ruin and murder without compunction?' 'Alas! my brother, she heard your sentence without a pang. 'If Desmond would be a fool,' said she, 'how can I help it? Truly so weak a head is not worth much lamentation.' The following morning she gave her hand to Zartowitz.'"

"My poor fellow," cried Casimir, "I

should have thought such an explanation would have anticipated the stroke of the executioner!—How could you bear it?"

"It operated, my lord, as if a basin of cold water had been thrown in my face; it brought me to my senses. I gave one long whistle, and a 'farewell, pretty Ella!' and have never experienced the slightest symptom of either the hot or cold fit from that hour."

"And have you seen her since?"

"Oh yes, my lord! immediately on my liberation, and ere the news of your generous and successful intercession had reached them, I hastened to pay my congratulations to the new married pair. Zartowitz looked like a cowardly thief, thinking, no doubt, I came to demand restitution; and Ella was in full preparation for a scene. Perhaps, poor thing, she was really frightened, for a more unexpected apparition could not have stood before her; and I believe she

would have preferred, of the two, to have seen me without my head rather than with it, weak as she had pronounced it to be. Certain it is, that she turned pale, and contrived to twinkle a few crystals into her eyes."

"And what then, Desmond?"

"Why then, my lord, I laughed, and laughed so significantly, that she saw her power was departed, and her dupe escaped. I despised her so ineffably that I could find no pleasure in plaguing her: so my visit was short, and unmarked by a single verbal reproach."

"And you are effectually and radically recovered?"

"As you see, my lord; but my medicine was a desperate one, and I trust your cure will be easier."

From that hour Desmond became doubly endeared to his patron, who no longer looked on him as a young cynic, who satirized what he had not the heart to feel. Though a few years younger

than himself, he constituted him his mentor, and resolved to refer to him his symptoms, and, as far as he was able, to adopt his councils. Nor could this delicate trust have been lodged in more faithful and judicious hands.

"Cause yourself, my lord, to be respected by the Baroness, at all hazards. Let her see you firmly and manfully exerting yourself in such matters as best befit your eminent station;—force her to acknowledge your merit. Let her see you at the right hand of the Emperor. Convince her that the son of Vallensteïn is worthy of a father who has filled all Europe with his fame. And, finally, should her wayward fancy declare in favour of another, compel her to blush for the inclination which sets judgment at defiance. Thus, my lord, you may be wounded and tortured, but you will avoid disgrace! These women!—Believe me, Count, nothing elates their haughty, ambitious spirit, like dragging

after their chariot wheels, a spectacle to the people—a captive such as you; and completing the pageant by treading on your neck! Follow her like her shadow—languish at her—sigh for her—kneel to her—I have told you the result. Even if in heart she loved you, maltreatment would be the inevitable consequence—no human brain can bear such clouds of incense! Take an advantageous position, and let her contemplate you at a little distance. I would gladly assist you to win her, but I will never consent to see you throw yourself beneath her feet."

Casimir's heart was soothed by this view of the subject; and his spirits elated by the thought of conquering the approbation, which had been, in the first instance, so ungratefully and unjustly withheld. He sent Desmond to the Vice-Chamberlain, to request his wish might be formally intimated for an introduction on the following morning to the Em-

peror. Desmond quickly returned, and, with an air of diplomatic importance, informed his patron, that he had himself been admitted to the speech of his imperial majesty, who had received him in his cabinet; and having written a few words on a slip of paper, folded, sealed it, and ordered him to give it into the hands of the Count. Vallensteïn found in it a brief command to come that night to the palace.

"Do not fail to be, at eight o'clock, at the west gate; you will be met there, and conducted to an apartment, where we may confer in private."

"Well, this is prosperous!" said Casimir: "I reckoned on having days, weeks perhaps, to wait ere I could reasonably solicit that which is thus promptly and voluntarily accorded—thus I shall be able to give the Duke early and important intelligence."

Exactly at the hour prescribed, Casimir, wrapt close in his pelisse, stood at

the little western gate. A man, fenced, like himself, from cold and observation, awaited him there, took his arm in silence, and drew him into the palace, carefully locking the gate after him: they then rapidly ascended a narrow staircase, which led to a small and apparently isolated apartment, the door of which Casimir's conductor carefully fastened, and throwing off the mantle which enveloped him, revealed the Emperor. Vallensteïn bent his knee to his sovereign.

"Rise, sir," said Ferdinand, "rise, son of my best friend! We do not meet here, young man, as sovereign and subject; harassed, ensnared, and disarmed by the Machiavelian arts of politicians, I pine after the return of mutual confidence, I yearn to hear once more the language of truth."

"Your majesty shall hear none other from the son of Vallensteïn."

"Yet, alas!" said Ferdinand, "why

should I desire the truth from your lips? And what will it tell, but that I have been a weak ungrateful master to the noblest, best of servants?"

"My gracious Lord, such generous acknowledgment is the proudest tribute a noble mind can receive, and I trust your Majesty will have proof that the mind of Vallensteïn has in no degree degenerated on the decline of his fortunes; he is no less faithful in his passive duties than when he had the happiness to serve your Majesty in the face of the world."

"I know it well, Count! Look here, young man!" and opening the private drawer of a bureau, he drew from thence certain papers which he put into the hand of Casimir: "Seat yourself at your ease," he added, "for we have much to talk of. Cast your eye meanwhile over those letters, and imagine how bitter are my self-reproaches for having stretched forth my right arm, and permitted my enemies to sever it from my body."

Young Vallensteïn did as he was commanded, and, to his surprise, found the first paper to contain the copy of a letter from Arnheïm, who had deserted to the service of Gustavus Adolphus, to his father, inveighing against the ingratitude of Ferdinand, and inviting him to take signal vengeance by adopting the cause of the Swedish monarch, and becoming an equal sharer in that hero's glory, who had empowered the writer to offer him the confirmation of his rights in the duchy of Mecklenburg, the guarantee of all his other vast possessions, and the cession of other privileges sufficient to inflame the ambition of a less exalted soul than that of Vallensteïn, whose reply ran thus:

"Arnheïm! your advice is the advice of a traitor, and I despise it as I despise him from whom it emanates. I shall rise again, and then, as you are fond of bestowing counsel, advise your king of snow to keep out of the sun.

"FRIEDLAND."

"There," said Ferdinand, "is a glorious, a godlike spirit. No tampering, no wavering, no pausing to see the event of things, but a great soul, speaking its own concise and spontaneous language. With shame and contrition, I confess, that when I signed my consent to your father's retirement, my hand alone was concerned in the act; for both my head and heart protested against it. Alas! my reluctance has since been but too well justified! Now I know the men at whose instigation—must I say under whose compulsion—that signature was wrung from me! I know them as they are—the creatures of Richelieu. Bavaria, whom I loved as a private man loves his friend, and father Joseph, with whom every secret of my soul was deposited*. In short,

* Ferdinand equally felt for the deception and for the manner in which it was effected, under the guise of religious faith and private friendship, and was frequently heard to exclaim, 'A capuchin friar has disarmed me with his rosary, and covered six electoral caps with his cowl.' Coxe's House of Austria, Vol. I. part 2, chap. 51, page 827.

that capuchin has disarmed me with his rosary, and covered six electoral caps with his cowl."

"But if your Imperial Majesty has the clew to these intricacies, surely they will easily unravel."

"Ah, my son!" said the Emperor, "to the sanguine imagination of youth what is not easy? But I dare not even betray to these men that I have sounded their hollowness. I am condemned silently to behold their operations; yea, to know as well as themselves, that they tend to the downfal of my house, and the dismemberment of my dominions, and yet to forbear. And this, young man, is royalty!"

"It is possible, my gracious sovereign, that the private despatches I am charged with by my father may suggest some remedy for an evil so mighty."

The Emperor seized those despatches with avidity, as if he believed they contained some charm which could work the restoration of his peace, and re-or-

ganize his affairs. He locked them in his desk, and then proceeded to inform young Vallenstein that he had reason to know the progress of the hitherto invincible Gustavus had been connived at by those of his electors and nobles, who still wore the mask of friendship and fealty to their abused sovereign, and whose secret practices were even more destructive than the hostility of those who were openly in rebellion.

"My General Tilly," pursued he, "is brave and skilful, but presumptuous and cruel—his very successes make me shudder to the centre! The recent sack of Magdeburgh was a deed of horror, such as few Christian reigns can parallel: the brute himself boasted its comparison with the burning of Troy and the destruction of Jerusalem! Thus, whichever way I look, clouds and tempests seem thickening around me, and, save the man whom I have driven from my side, my eyes

wander vainly round the world in search of a friend."

He confessed to Casimir, that should their secret conference be by any means discovered, it would involve him in incalculable difficulties:—"For," said he, "it is not the least of my miseries, that I must dissemble with these dissemblers. My household is corrupt, my actions are watched, my words registered, my very sighs numbered. And you, young man, it behoves you to be wary. Born, as you were, in the eagle's nest, there is no danger of your being dazzled and misled by this close admission to the countenance of your sovereign; but you will be surrounded by crafty examiners. Reserve, therefore, will be insufficient; you will need address; and, above all, be cautious in your choice of those agents who travel between you and Prague."

As Ferdinand proceeded in his admonitions and instructions, and in various

inquiries respecting the nobles and distinguished military who adhered to the fortunes of the Duke of Friedland, a light step was heard ascending the stair, and a tap at the door announced an intruder. Casimir started, and changed colour, fearing that the much-dreaded detection of this nocturnal audience was at hand; but the emperor's care-worn countenance relaxed into a tender smile, as he cried,

"Come in, Mary Anne! Did I say I had no friend on whom I might repose my harassed spirit? Yet here comes one whose precious sympathy entwines its roses with my thorny crown:—it is my wife!"

'It is my wife!' thrilled to Vallenstein's heart; and he now envied the man on whose destiny, but the moment before, all the compassion of his soul had been lavished. He knelt, and kissed the fair hand which was graciously extended to him; but the eyes of the Em-

press scarcely rested on *him* for an instant.

"Oh, my Ferdinand!" said she, "your wasting form and hollow cheek but too clearly betray the consequences of these vigils! Behold! (pointing to the clock, whose finger touched the stroke of three), I became almost alarmed at your silence, and ventured to seek you."

"And this is the man," thought Casimir, "whom I deemed unhappy!"

The cheek of the Empress, like that of her august partner, bore the characters of care: her soft blue eyes had a mournful expression. She was attired in a simple white robe, and divested totally of every note of sovereignty, but such as nature had impressed her with, and which were unalienable: her figure was somewhat above the usual height, and her air had in it an undefinable and unassumed majesty, which at a glance secured the respect of the beholder as her unquestioned tribute: her sun had passed

its meridian; but she had yet enough of loveliness to secure, from the tender admiration of her subjects, that homage which their factious tempers might have withheld from a less fascinating empress: to Ferdinand she was the friend, the consoler, the repository of his uneasy thoughts, the kind pillow on which his weary head reclined itself. As Casimir ventured to lift his eyes to her countenance, he thought on Louisa.

"Such as she is," said he mentally, "will the Lady of Marchfeldt be, some thirty years hence!"

And there was, in truth, a similarity in the character of their beauty which authorised the comparison. The Emperor briefly explained the nature of the conference, which had beguiled him through so many hours; and, as he presented the son of Vallensteïn,

"You must not," said he, smiling, "betray our mysteries to our cousin Maximilian; for I do not despair, by

the help of this youth's father, of ere long surprising our kinsman, and would not find myself anticipated. To-morrow," said he to Casimir, "you will appear at the levee, where you must quite forget this night's dream, and I shall set you the example. Be not chilled, whatever may appear on the surface. The frost-work pageant you will then behold exhibited is all artificial; what you now see and hear is genuine, and your heart may rest upon it."

He then bade him cordially good night, and the Empress, again presenting him her hand, said graciously,

"Count, you have smoothed his Majesty's brow by your communications: very seldom have his nocturnal vigils a like effect. In truth, your countenance bodes well. May a portion of whatever good you bring rest with the messenger!"

Entrusted with a key to the little postern door, which he was to retain for his

future use, and taught to elude whatever obstructions he might meet from centinels or others, he glided down the stair, and soon returned safe and unobserved at the Hotel Vallensteïn. He went to his bed with a mind and heart so full, that sleep was out of the question: even the image of Louisa was compelled to divide its residence with other objects—the purest zeal and compassion for his betrayed and persecuted sovereign; the most ardent desire to behold him and his own father restored to a position in which they might triumphantly defy their mutual enemies; and, above all, an enthusiastic wish to be in the lowest degree an instrument in restoring happiness and tranquillity to that majestic woman who shared the throne and sorrows of the Emperor—such were the materials of which his reveries were made; nor were they unbecoming a temper so lofty and ingenuous. He could not conceive how

those who had daily opportunities of beholding and listening to the Empress could find courage to implant a thorn in that gentle, yet exalted bosom; for Casimir was a chevalier of the old stamp, and the ostensible motives which bade an ancient knight ride forth, afforded exactly the sort of spur which would have stimulated him to range the universe.

CHAPTER VII.

"Why, if thou never wast at court, thou never
Saw'st good manners; if thou never saw'st good manners,
Then thy manners must be wicked; and wickedness is sin,
And sin damnation: thou art in a parlous state, shepherd!"

Shakspeare.

The Baroness of Marchfeldt was to be presented by her aunt of Erdenheïm, by a singular coincidence, on the same day on which Vallensteïn's maternal uncle, Count Harrach, was to perform the same service for him. When the former entered the drawing-room, she found the Empress surrounded by the ladies of her household, and a few of the distinguished female noblesse: the gentlemen consisted only of her chamberlain and a couple of pages, one of them merely a child.

There was a resemblance of person and correspondence of mind between the Empress and Louisa of Marchfeldt, which was mutually and almost instantaneously felt: each internally acknowledged her kindred and accordance with the other, and they were friends in heart ere, in fact, they ceased to be strangers. Louisa had never before stood in the presence of royalty; a sentiment of filial awe mingled in the admiration with which she beheld her august sovereign, and the smile of the Empress was more than usually benign and gracious, as she raised and embraced the fair Hungarian.

"At length, then, Baroness," said she, "we have succeeded in winning you from your beloved retirement: such a rose was not born to wither in the wilderness. And yet," added she, thoughtfully, "there is peace in the wilderness, and if there are none to flatter there, there are none to betray."

Poor Louisa echoed the sigh with

which this was spoken from the centre of her heart, but she dared not say—though she thought, " Where will not treachery penetrate?"

The Empress seldom trusted herself in public with the utterance of words which might be referred to feelings; for Mary Anne of Bavaria was no less closely watched in than her Imperial spouse; she was accustomed, therefore, to intrench herself within the limits of court etiquette, and smiled, spoke, and curtsied by rule: nevertheless, there was somewhat in the voice and countenance of the young Baroness which surprised her into the expression of a genuine sentiment, and, conscious of the lapse, she resumed her wonted position.

" Well, madam," said she, " as we *have* caught you, we will not permit you to escape till we have made a courtier of you; and if we do not succeed in teaching you to be happy amongst us, we will undertake that you shall learn, at least,

to abhor solitude.—What say *you*, madam?" addressing Princess Stolberg, her principal lady of the key.

"I think your Imperial Majesty is right:—the Baroness of Marchfeldt will never endure the monotonous stillness of her old towers, when she has drank of the enchanted cup which circulates only in the haunts of the powerful and the brilliant. In fact, the true Lotos grows with us; once tasted, home and all its homely delights are infallibly forgotten."

"If," said Louisa, timidly, "to be a courtier, implies the privilege of bringing in person the tribute of dutiful attachment to the foot of my sovereign, I long to be installed in the office."

"Very well, indeed!" exclaimed Princess Stolberg, sarcastically: "Your first essay, lady, has so much genius in it, there is danger you will foil your instructors."

"But," observed the Empress, "though the phrase is of courtly model, there was

a rustic emotion in the utterance of it which savours of the banks of the Raab: you will have some trouble with her yet, I suspect."

And though she uttered these words in an ambiguous tone, and trusted not her lips with a smile, a sort of intelligence seemed already established between her and Louisa, and the latter felt a pleased conviction that her charming sovereign regarded her with partial favour.

Baroness Erdenheïm was the counterpart of her lord, from whom she varied only in possessing somewhat less of sentiment, and in rather caricaturing his etiquettes and formalities: she was, in short, a mere lady of procession, strictly attached to antique observances, and abhorring the mere notion of innovation, however amiable and insinuating the form it might assume;—she was an automaton courtier, taciturn and solemn: her words were few and well placed, never offending by the indecorous introduction of an

idea: her curtsies were admirably adapted to the pretensions of the individual to whom they were made; indeed, so infallible were they deemed, as almost to serve as a reference in points of precedence—as, for instance,

"I cannot think of giving place to Madame de Rochefort! My superior claims need no vindication; but, if they did, I might appeal to Baroness Erdenheïm's curtsy;—to Madame de Rochefort, it did not exceed six inches; to me, it was a very ample quarter of a yard."

Madame Erdenheïm never flattered, and seldom smiled, but she was silently assiduous, always in her place, and always ready to perform her mechanical duties: she was greatly surprised and shocked at the presumption of her niece, which she attributed to her Hungarian breeding:—to allow the sound of her voice to be heard by the Empress, on her very first introduction, was in itself a deviation from the *ton* of the day; but to speak in

an accent and with a countenance which betrayed the existence of that vulgar thing a heart, in such a presence, might well disconcert and confound the mechanical good breeding of the Baroness Erdenheïm, and she blushed through her rouge at her degenerate relative, severely tasking herself for having neglected to keep her a short time in training. The Empress, fearing to excite the malignity of any of her keen observers by farther acts of attention to the interesting stranger, began to converse playfully with her youngest page, the orphan son of a lady who had shared and deserved her favour. Wonderful to tell, little Theodore was a favourite without foes; no one condescended to fear or envy a baby, and the happy rogue shared the comfits and caresses of all the ladies of the court. While they were laughing at his artless prattle, and provoking his repartees, the Emperor and some of his gentlemen entered the circle;—a solemn bow and curtsy were

exchanged by the Imperial pair, and Louisa underwent the ceremony of presentation to his Majesty, who, without reference to the reluctance with which she had consented to visit the capital, bade her welcome with much goodness; indeed, he had little leisure to think or care about the caprices of his female subjects. Little Theodore had been employed for a few minutes in an earnest examination of Louisa's countenance.

"It would seem, lady," said Ferdinand, "you have made one captive at least, already—an earnest, no doubt, of many to come.—But what are you thinking, Theodore? You have been silent three minutes."

"I have been trying to find out the difference between her Majesty and that young lady."

"You are a shrewd knave, and have found the *likeness*, it seems. There is, in truth, a striking resemblance between the Empress and the Baroness of March-

feldt.—It must unquestionably have caught your observation?" said he, turning to the ladies.

"Your Imperial Majesty is all goodness," replied Madame Erdenheïm; "but my niece would not, for the world, be guilty of the presumption of supposing there can be the slightest degree of resemblance between her and our gracious mistress."

"Yet, madam, we cannot acquit her of the audacious fact, however innocent her intentions may be."

"Why," said Theodore, "they are both tall, and both fair, both have blue eyes, both look serious till they smile, and then, it is beautiful. But besides, the new lady is altogether more like an empress than any of the others."

"You little wretch," said Princess Stolberg, "you have all the fickleness of your sex, it seems: but, do pray tell us, wherein is the *new* lady so like an empress?"

"Oh! I can't explain why, if I were to try all day! But she makes me feel as if I should be so afraid to vex her, and as if I could love her *so* dearly! Just as I feel about my own Imperial mistress."

And he lifted up his rosy face to the Empress, his dark eyes shining with grateful sensibility. Poor Theodore had disconcerted nearly the whole circle:—Louisa felt agitated and embarrassed, for her native sense would have suggested to her that the idle prattle of the page was calculated to excite against her the resentful vanity of the ladies of the court, even had the cloud which crept over the brow of Princess Stolberg withheld its evidence; but there was not a lady in the circle who did not find herself aggrieved by the odious comparison, and the Empress was too well read in the tempers of those around her, not to deprecate internally the mischief to which the child's open admiration of Louisa would give birth. But the attention of

all present was quickly diverted by the entrance of Counts Harrach and Casimir of Vallensteïn. Count Harrach was brother to the Duke of Friedland's second wife, who had died in the infancy of our hero: during the predominance of his brother-in-law, he boasted loudly of the connexion, and failed not to use it to the utmost in the promotion of many a scheme for his own aggrandisement; no one more pompously set forth the abilities, the transcendant genius, the almost supernatural influence of this great man: he was, in short, the eternal theme of his discourse; in particular, if any thing seemed to indicate too light a valuation of his own person, he always condescended to assist his importance by a little borrowed lustre: then, "my illustrious brother the Duke of Friedland" was sure to be dragged into the subject, even if it turned on the texture of a pair of point ruffles: but Count Harrach's fraternal feelings had received a severe concussion

in the disgrace, and retirement from power, of the elder Vallensteïn, as he firmly believed he had "fallen, like Lucifer, never to rise again;" nor did he feel that natural yearning towards his young kinsman which, under other circumstances, he might have felt. However, being a man of timorous, cautious character, the fear of incurring the ponderous displeasure of the exiled duke secured his courtly politeness, as he had learned from experience that there was something very searching to the soul in the rebuke of his once dear brother; he dared not therefore decline the office imposed on him of presenting his nephew, though he would rather it had been spared him, and Casimir remarked with contemptuous enjoyment the embarrassed hesitation of this genuine courtier, when he found himself in the mortifying predicament of reminding the world that the son of a disgraced man was so nearly akin to him. Very fortunately for young

Vallenstein, at the moment of his entrance, the Baroness of Marchfeldt was standing behind the Empress, and he was not conscious of her presence, while the sight of him caused her carefully to preserve her invisible station: he therefore acquitted himself in the ceremonial with the manly grace natural to him, though, in spite of the Emperor's warning, the freezing manner in which he was publicly received chilled his spirits, and he could scarcely believe that the haughty, austere monarch, before whom he now stood, was the same individual with whom, during the greater part of the night, he had conversed with all the confidence of a favoured son and an indulgent father. He trembled to think that his reception from the Empress would wear the same character, and hardly felt courage to approach one whose frown, he conceived, must be as insupportable as her smile was enchanting. Count Harrach, whose confusion increased in some proportion with

that of his kinsman, was compelled to go through with his reluctant task, and to present Casimir to the Empress; an office, which, under other circumstances, his Imperial Majesty generally took upon himself. For the first time in his life did Casimir feel his courage falter, and his confidence desert him: he stood in a new and difficult position, and was driven to his utmost effort to meet the exigence with fortitude; nor did he find his nerves braced the better for the conflict, by perceiving, at the moment when he bent his knee to kiss the hand of his august mistress, that his humiliations had been looked upon by the Baroness of Marchfeldt. Almost speechless from painful emotion, his colour varying from red to pale, his heart throbbing within him, and beset by a crowd of the most overwhelming feelings, he rose from the floor scarcely conscious where he was, or what he did. The Empress, not unaware of the situation of his mind, suffered for

him, but dared not evince her sympathy; the Baroness of Marchfeldt curtsied to him, and did not appear inclined to discourage, if she did not invite his advance. He murmured a scarce audible inquiry after her health, and attempted to express a hope that it had not been materially injured by her dangerous adventure at the post-house. His compliment and his questions were replied to with a composure more effectually annihilating to the dreams of a lover than even the display of aversion, and Vallensteïn was miserable: nevertheless, at that moment, the eyes of several fair ladies were riveted to his countenance, and earnestly soliciting a responsive glance. The cold calm of the Baroness was so intolerable, that he soon relinquished the conversation, and leaning his back against a pillar, and folding his arms, resigned himself in proud displeasure to most perturbed musings.—As if his mortification was to know no limits, the entrance of Maximilian of Bavaria, his father's triumphant

enemy, the friendly greeting with which he was met by the injured Ferdinand, and the insolent confidence with which the traitor was permitted to carry his plotting head in that very circle where he had been received almost like one who had no right to enter it, was the drop in his cup of bitterness which filled it to overflowing.—Bavaria retired with the Emperor to a corner of the saloon, and Casimir felt assured that he was the theme of their conversation, from the looks cast towards him from time to time by the duke:—he could likewise perceive that the conference was not strictly amicable.

"Ah!" thought he, "his highness, no doubt, takes exceptions at my license to stand here! It is not enough, that the son of the first man in Europe is slighted and neglected, but his admission must be prohibited!—Nay, if you yield that, Ferdinand, I renounce for ever the service of so cowardly a master!"

He guessed right as to the subject in

debate. Bavaria was indeed expressing his displeased wonder, on beholding the son of the Duke of Friedland in that circle, and remonstrating with the Emperor on the jealousies and schisms such an apparition was likely to create amongst the Electors, who had united their voices with his for the duke's dismissal.

"Methinks, cousin," was Ferdinand's reply, "you take me for your pupil; but there are bounds to my docility. You have succeeded in driving Count Vallenstein the elder from the head of my armies, but you shall not, comparative trifle as it may seem, drive his son from this circle."

Maximilian, grown bold from impunity, as well as privileged by his near affinity to his sovereign, muttered indistinctly something like a threat that either he himself or young Vallenstein must withdraw; but Ferdinand felt his freewill so grossly attacked, and was so sensible of the gradual yet rapid innova-

tions to which his dignity, not only as a sovereign, but as a man, was exposed, that he turned from the exasperated duke, and left him to cool as he might. Nor was this the only conference of which Vallensteïn was the subject: Princess Stolberg, who had beheld him from his first entrance with admiring curiosity, drew Count Harrach to her side by a glance of invitation.

"Count!" exclaimed she, "what an Apollo is your nephew! We have seen nothing like him at court this age! How proud you must be of him!"

"Why, for that matter, princess,—I cannot altogether pretend to say that his presence in this place has my concurrence:—it has no acquiescence of mine, you may be assured. As for being proud of him—the youth *is* handsome, no doubt; but, I protest, there is a sullen fierceness about him, that,—that—"

"I understand you, Count," said the princess, archly; "you would say, that

you are not *quite* so proud of him as you were of his father when he was in his zenith! I remember how you did idolize him! Positively, it was quite affecting to witness such disinterested attachment!"

Harrach, who did not much relish the reference to his "dear and illustrious brother," was relieved by the Baroness of Erdenheïm observing, that she could not possibly see any thing to admire in the young count.

"And it is," said she, as if by way of assigning her reason for this negative sentence, "clear to me that their Imperial Majesties look very coldly on him. And besides, a more ill-bred youth I never beheld! I have witnessed, thank Heaven! many first presentations, but have never seen any of our young nobles, whatever might be their reception, so ignorant as to betray resentment, either in countenance or manner; and I, for my part, cannot wonder if Count Harrach is ashamed and disconcerted!"

" Ay, madam," said the count, comforted by the volunteer aid of such an ally; " nor does the matter end there: his Highness of Bavaria, a prince, whom for worlds I would not offend, regards me with a countenance of such displeasure, as absolutely petrifies me! I flatter myself, no man stood in higher estimation with his highness than I did, till my infatuated brother-in-law chose to send his boy to *me*, of all people, as if for the purpose of ruining me; and now, for aught I can see, the noble Maximilian may never look on me favourably again!"

" Very hard, indeed!" responded Madame Erdenheïm, " a most painful predicament!"

" Well," said Princess Stolberg, " I would rather see that fine expressive countenance, which betrays so powerfully the irritated feelings of a manly mind, expand into a smile, than receive a dozen nods from that black-browed Bavaria; but there is no accounting for difference of

taste. That young Vallensteïn should revolt against the reception he has met with I cannot wonder, unless it had converted him, as Duke Maximilian's frown has operated on you, my lord, into a petrifaction.—I will go speak to him."

Harrach and his ally uplifted their hands and eyes.

" I wonder," said the former, " how that rash and volatile lady maintains her influence."

" I really cannot divine," returned the Baroness; " for unquestionably her indecorums are of the most flagrant description, and her disregard to precedence is not the least inconceivable part of her character."

" Her notice of Vallensteïn is the most ill-judged thing I ever heard of," observed the Count: " I really did cherish a hope that if he was left to his own sullenness, he would, perhaps, take huff and be off; but now there is no calculating,—young men are so vain. Do

see, madam, she has made him smile! and I dare say he will stay tormenting me, if it be only to dangle after her. If he does, I shall sink into the earth with vexation."

How delighted must a man feel, who, thrown upon a pathless desert, which owns, as he supposes, no second inhabitant, hears unexpectedly the accents of a human voice! It is somewhat similar in the world's wildness;—there are few who have not occasionally known the dreariness of complete isolation in the midst of a crowd, where a thousand concomitant circumstances augment and inhance their sense of individual solitude. It was the soft and soothing tone of a beautiful woman that awakened poor Casimir from his dream of neglect and desertion, and convinced him he was not alone. Princess Stolberg, in addressing him, divested herself of all the piquante flippancy with which she had amused herself in tormenting the two courtiers,

and threw into her voice and manner a modest gentleness which struck him as the product of generous pity, and, without exciting his vanity, awakened his gratitude.

"You, Count," said she, "who have no doubt frequented other courts, must be forcibly aware of the joyless solemnity of our formal Germanisms. They are discouraging to a novice, but beneath them there is something worth patience."

"I am loth, madam, to form my opinion of the Austrian court from my present impressions. The circumstances of the times may have tinged it with the sombre character it now exhibits; and that it *has* attractions, equal, at least, to any other in Europe, cannot be denied by the most perverse or insensible spirit."

And he marked the application of his courteous reply by as courteous a bow. While they were in conversation, the Duke of Bavaria passed so close, that his sword and that of Vallensteïn clashed.

Some similar feeling at the same moment covered with a crimson flush the cheek of each, as they turned suddenly and faced each other.

"I could not help it, sir," said the Duke, abruptly, anticipating the question he saw was coming.

"Of course!" replied young Vallensteïn, as briefly.

"That," said the Princess, "is our ursa-major: he is a pompous brute! I hate the sight of him! He did us, I suspect, more mischief than his Gothic Majesty himself threatens us with, when he removed by his arts the greatest soldier and the finest gentleman in Europe from the head of our armies, and gave his post to his own little fright of a general, Count Tilly."

Casimir could not help smiling as he replied, "Nature has in truth used Tilly somewhat shabbily as to externals; but that unprepossessing form is the shrine of a gallant spirit."

"Somewhat shabbily! She certainly forgot totally what she was about, and thought she was making an ape! Not that I am sorry to see him here occasionally; for his rude tricks are so comically disconcerting to the arrangement of some of our court puppets, that I have been more than once treated, at the expense of decorum, with a very comfortable fit of laughter. And that, Count, let me tell you, is an obligation not to be forgotten. Well do I remember his grotesque figure, his little pointed face eclipsed nearly by his prodigious whiskers, his straight, short grey hair, and his dry savage aspect, with his half Spanish, half German attire, and his pistol stuck in his belt, strutting about the saloon with the air of a sentinel mounting guard; reckless whom he elbowed, or on whose toes he trod. In an evil hour he nearly overset poor Count Harrach, who so far forgot his well-known prudence, as to turn with somewhat of contemptuous indignation

upon Tilly; but he was quickly restored to his pacific habits by the voice of the little general, who roared like a Stentor, 'You may smile, sir, at the difference of our fashions; but know, that with this pistol in my girdle, and without ever drawing it from thence, I have gained seven battles, and when you have done the same, Count Harrach, you will stand the shot of a coxcomb's smile!' And his great mustachios curled themselves up of their own accord, in the most frightful manner imaginable. You cannot think how your uncle's nerves were affected."

The lively chat of this volatile lady interrupted, not unpleasantly, the melancholy tenour of Vallensteïn's meditations; and he was comforted in thinking that he was not so forlorn a being at the court of his sovereign, as to be an object of interest to no one. He was surprised at the freedom with which she discussed subjects which he considered as prohibited, and expressed his wonder.

"The fact is," she replied, "I am a living thing amongst all these automatons. I am moreover true woman, and, thinking and feeling, I find it convenient to speak."

"But is there no penalty annexed to the gratification?"

"Have you never yet learned that cowardice is oftener in danger than courage? No one suspects my frankness, and there is nothing portentous in the changes of one who has established a character for sportive caprice, and is notorious for as frequent varyings as an April sky. Meanwhile, as a proof of my courage, I offer you my friendship. See, his Majesty looks as though he had some commands for me, and I must leave you; but, here is my earnest," and snatching a rose from her bosom, she threw it to him, and joined the Emperor. Almost immediately the Empress passed him near, and stopped on pretence of extricating her train from some-

thing on which it had caught. Common politeness required that he should offer his aid, and as he stooped in the performance of this little service, she whispered, "Nine to-night:—in the mean time, do not condemn, but pity."

Then, turning to him with a gracious curtsy of thanks for his assistance, she quitted the saloon attended by all the ladies, and soon after his Majesty dismissed the nobles not attached to his personal suite.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Ah, Madam! ask the life-blood from my heart!
'Ask all, but what a soldier may not give."

Joanna Baillie.

As young Vallensteïn was ascending the step of his carriage, he was somewhat surprised to find himself delayed by the formal Baron Erdenheïm.

"Do not take it amiss, Count," said he, "if, although, in my official capacity, as things stand at present, I cannot with propriety show you the respect I could wish in public, I venture to express a hope that you will sometimes honour the hotel Erdenheïm with your presence, as the friend of my late nephew, Wilhelm of Marchfeldt. I am, it is true, an old courtier, but I have not divested myself of certain home-born feelings."

Vallensteïn was half pleased, half in-

dignant, at this most unexpected solicitation.

"But, my Lord," said he, hesitating, "the Emperor,—he may not approve."

"Oh," replied the Baron, frankly, "I have his gracious permission. After God, I owe my duty to my Imperial Master, and had he not sanctioned my invitation, whatever regret it might have caused me, I should have stifled my inclination to acknowledge your kindness to my nephew as an inferior consideration."

There was something in the *naïve* confession of the old courtier that won the esteem of Vallensteïn:—still he paused.

"Come," said the Baron, "sup with me to-morrow, for the sake of him who is gone, and whom we both loved. You shall meet his sister, the lovely heiress of Marchfeldt. When I was as young as you are, I could not have turned from such a bait."

Vallensteïn hesitated no longer, but bowed compliance; and, his heart oppressed by many feelings, most of them bitter, he drove home, attended by his pompous retinue.

Happily Desmond was absent, and he had time to compose his spirits, and to consider what might be related and what must be concealed. Willingly would he have reposed every thought in the breast of his affectionate and sensible friend, for he felt the whole burthen somewhat overweighed his own; but he was diffident of his right to make the transfer. Having now leisure to think without interruption, and an opportunity for the calm examination of his own position, he was not long in arriving at the conclusion, that it was one he could not maintain, and whose peculiar and appropriate mortifications and penances he could not, would not endure.

" I love, said he, striking his aching forehead, " love passionately, without a hope of exciting a mutual feeling. I am

denied the means of aspiring even to the esteem of the woman, who unjustly and ungratefully refuses me her affection. I am placed before her an object of humiliation and neglect. For my Imperial Master, above all, for the fascinating partner of his cares, what task of honour could they propose to me, however arduous, which I would not execute, or die in the failure! But to be made the victim of a cruel policy, to stand amid their fawning treacherous courtiers as a scarce tolerated being; one whom it required more than courtly courage to notice—by Heaven, it is too much! No, never will I a second time be subject to such insult. I will stand in my own place; I will speak my own language, and assert the inherent nobleness of my own nature in the face of these masqueraders. This night I will take leave of my sovereigns; I will show them the inside of a manly heart, and then,—adieu, for ever, to courts!"

When Desmond returned, he found

Vallensteïn quite decided on a sudden renunciation of all the views which had led him to Vienna.

"Desmond, my dear fellow," he cried, "I am soul-sick. If I remain here another week I shall be mad. Every thing here is so artificial, that my senses stagger and are confounded. I cannot distinguish that which is real from that which only seems. Love, ambition, or rather let me call it the pure zeal which animated me to serve my father and my Prince—I must renounce all! In short, we must go hence. Oh, if I could properly reveal to you my reasons, your honest single heart would applaud my resolution!"

"Well, Count," replied Desmond, calmly, "have with you through the world. I have no better employment than to follow your lead, for I conclude you do not mean to live an idle life. What, shall we join Tilly, and return to our old trade?"

"I should ask no better, my friend, than to raise a regiment among my father's followers, and once more to the field; but that path is not open. The duke will not permit me to fight till he is again leader of the Emperor's armies; and, though I must confess myself inadequate to some of the tasks he has allotted me, I will never offend him by any positive act."

"What then remains, sir," said the lieutenant, gravely, "I cannot devise, unless we spend the time in playing chess; or what think you of taking the cowl? I would not adopt Saint Bruno's rule, but we might exchange the baldric for a cord, and make a couple of merry Franciscans."

"But *my* mood inclines me not to mirth. God knows if I shall ever smile again! Few men have entered life with fairer prospects than I: yet now am I sick of my very existence! Yes, Desmond, I envy, deeply envy, the fate of that poor

lad to whose memory my earliest tears were dedicated."

Desmond changed his tone.—" My lord," said he, " you are fevered and agitated: whatever you decide now will be decided rashly.—Wait till to-morrow."

" I could wish, Desmond, to prepare immediately some despatches for my father, with which you shall set off to-morrow for Prague. To unburthen my heart through the medium of my pen—to explain to the Duke why I cannot, will not, proceed, will be a wonderful relief."

" Well, sir; as you please."

The lieutenant was a man who could not dissemble his thought, and his sullen " as you please" said all that was necessary as to his opinion of these summary proceedings; but Casimir felt all the pride of one who is about to make an energetic effort for his own emancipation; nor could he forbear amusing

himself with visionary speculations on the effect his retreat would produce on the several persons whose conduct had, in one shape or other, led to it; and this temporary elation he urged in justification of the step.

"You see," said he, "it was absolutely necessary I should thus decide, since, from the moment my mind was fixed, I have been happy—positively happy!"

"I am glad of it, my lord," replied his phlegmatic companion.

Vallensteïn sate down to compose his despatches, sometimes whistling, sometimes thinking aloud, while the lieutenant silently paced the room.

"Desmond, I shall have a powerful attack to stand to-night; but it does not signify: I am firm as a rock—nothing on earth shall detain me above two days longer at Vienna!"

He was not long in composing his credentials: their tone was as pithy and

peremptory as could be made, accordant with his respect for him to whom they were addressed. He sealed and deposited the packet in the lieutenant's hands.

"It is brief," said he, "but, I flatter myself, convincing. I shall not linger many days after you, and at Prague we may consult on our future plans."

"I suppose, my lord, you would have me wait the result of this night's conference at the palace!"

"Oh! that can make no difference, since I am resolved; but you need not depart till daybreak."

The effervescence was still working, when he turned the key in the postern gate, and ascended the private stair of the palace. He tapped at the door of the chamber where he had met the Emperor, and was now admitted by the Empress.

"I am deputed by my august spouse to receive you," she said. "In the meanwhile take your seat, and we will

converse." Her fine eyes calmly perused his agitated countenance. "Yes," she said, "I know well what is now passing within you:—I do not, cannot, condemn it."

As Vallensteïn stole a look at her soft blue eyes, and listened to the liquid harmony of her voice, somewhat of the high tone of his resolution forsook him; however, he stood upon his guard.

"It is *impossible,*" said he coldly, "that your majesty should stoop to calculate the feelings of a single individual of your wide and peopled empire; nor would I presume, but from necessity, so to abuse the privilege you now vouchsafe me, as to intrude one word of egotism on your ear. But, madam, I am a man; and, pardon me, I never knew, till this day forced the truth on me, how proud a man."

"You conceived yourself unworthily overlooked to-day?"

"I thought, madam, that the son

of the Duke of Friedland had no place in your majesty's circle; and I was convinced there are sciences of too difficult attainment for his capacity. Oh!" continued he, deeply touched by the mild, half supplicating, air with which the Empress regarded him; and, throwing himself at her feet—"Any ostensible, any honourable employment, any thing for which I am fit, or which is fit for me—name it! I care not how desperate the enterprise—how rash the attempt! That voice of yours, the hope of one gracious smile bestowed on me in the sight of my country, might animate me to any effort; but a repetition of this day's trial—pardon me, madam—I must not, I *will* not, undergo it."

"You will not! Rise, sir, I command you. Your words and your posture are most unhappily at variance."

Vallensteïn obeyed, and dejectedly awaited the conclusion of her majesty's pause.

"Am I to conclude, Count, that you

would change places with any of the forms which this day figured in the empty pageant, in which you conceive yourself to have borne so derogatory a part?—Would you barter the intimate and affectionate confidence his majesty has been pleased to repose in you, for the hollow mechanical courtesy state policy obliges him, for the present, to dispense to those by whom he is surrounded? I trusted, Count, that your ambition had soared a more exalted pitch!—I did not suspect that you, like the million, were swayed by the influence of such poor and heartless vanity."

"Alas! madam, the pageant was too well played: I could not discriminate between false and natural; and it is plain I lack talents to sustain the part assigned me in this state drama."

"Young man," said the Empress, "you are not the first who has approached the throne rich in florid professions, boiling with fervent attachment and loyal zeal, who would, at his majesty's

bidding, break his spear against the whirlwind—whose service no fatigues could weary—whose courage no difficulty could foil. But when the task was allotted—alas! then came the falling off! *Then* it was discovered that any test, save only the one by which they were tried, would have been courageously met. I thought you had belonged to a rarer class!"

Vallenstein stood speechless for a moment, then again threw himself at the feet of the imperial enchantress.

"Be it even as you will, madam," said he, "deign but to forgive my boyish petulance—I am your slave from this moment! Persuade me only that I am serving you, and I am active or passive at your bidding."

The Empress smiled as she extended her fair hand. "You are a froward youth," said she, "but you have a good heart yet. You will not disappoint me?"

"No, by heaven!" he cried.

"Well," she said, "perhaps it may soothe you to know that your penance of this morning was deeply shared. When my august Ferdinand first met me in private, his eyes were filled with tears. 'Mary Ann,' he said, 'never before have I felt so poignantly the degradation to which traitors have reduced me! The mortification of that noble youth stung me to the quick. I *will* break these trammels!—What must he think of the man who fawns upon his enemies and treats his friends with wounding neglect? I have debased myself in young Vallenstein's eyes—I cannot see him to-night!' 'Then I will,' said I, 'for we must not lose him!'"

"Oh!" cried Vallensteïn: "this is tenfold amends for this morning's probation! For this I will bear any thing, even"—— and he paused.

"Ferdinand," pursued the Empress, "has defied the resentment of our haughty cousin of Bavaria on your ac-

count; and is resolved, moreover, that although he cannot yet extend to you, publicly, that portion of his favour which his heart accords, you shall never know a repetition of this day's endurances."

"Enough, enough, my gracious mistress!—I cannot bear more."

"Yet I have not done; I am commissioned to command your habitual attendance at court; and you will take care especially to attend my circle. I expect assiduous homage from you. You are not half supple enough for a courtier, and must practise pliancy; you must provide yourself with a countenance of ceremony; it is no less indispensable than an embroidered habit. Such a one as you wore this morning was never seen before, I believe, in an imperial circle."

"It shall appear there no more, madam."

"Well, Count, to execute all my credentials properly, I must deposit these

papers in your hands; transmit them, by your best means, to your illustrious father. The Emperor is more than ever bent on accelerating arrangements for his restoration to a post in which the best must follow him imperfectly; and, that you may not suppose your presence has been useless at Vienna, let me tell you the embittered feelings excited in the soul of your gracious master, by your unsuitable situation this morning, has proved a stimulus to the adoption of more decided measures than he has hitherto held expedient. Farewell!—We meet to-morrow."

Away went Vallensteïn; all thoughts of quitting Vienna eradicated from his brain, and all the mortification of his spirit, so far as it was caused by the conduct of his sovereign, healed and assuaged. On arriving at his hotel, he aroused Desmond, to acquaint him with the transition which had taken place in his ideas.

"You will think me a mere weather-cock, lieutenant; for, after all, I have abandoned my intention of a journey to Prague."

"I can only rejoice, that the wind sits in a better quarter.—But will you permit me one question? and it shall be a discreet one."

"Propose it, Desmond!"

"Was it the Empress who won you from your purpose?"

"Why, yes!—It *was* the Empress. Perhaps you think me the greater fool for allowing the arts of a woman thus to sway with me, but her reasons were unanswerable."

"You mistake me, Count; I rather marvel that you could for a moment—you, who are admitted to the discourse of that majestic woman—to listen to her silver voice—to know that your own has admission to her ear—to contemplate the mild dignity of those blue eyes—nay, sometimes to feel them resting on your

countenance! I marvelled you could think, for a moment, of evading her magic circle."

"Well said, my friend," said Wallenstein laughing, surprised by the grave ardour with which this speech was uttered. "Our Bavarian Juno has stolen your heart, methinks; but remember Ixion! Meanwhile, here is a packet which her hand put into mine; you will carry it to Prague in lieu of the one I prepared for you a few hours ago. I have only to add, the sooner you return to me the better; I shall look out for you impatiently."

CHAPTER IX.

"Why, what a deal of candied courtesy
This fawning greyhound then did proffer me!"
Shakspeare.

The following day, soon after the Emperor and his train had joined the circle of the Empress, Vallensteïn appeared in it: no longer deeming it necessary to distress his politic uncle, by any claim on his countenance or sanction, he entered alone. Count Harrach rather suspected that even the bare toleration his nephew had been indulged with, at the preceding levee, was the fruit of his influence; and now that the youth wanted this shield, confidently expected to see even that denied him. Greatly, therefore, was he surprised and puzzled to observe that his imperial majesty received him with a gracious smile, and asked

him, in an audible voice, after the health of his illustrious father.

"He is a most extraordinary man," added he; "never was there a more striking example of self-sufficiency, in the pure acceptation of the phrase; he needs not the ripening sunshine of any man's countenance, but is strong in his own self-sustaining genius. A man of lesser soul than your father, sir, would, under present circumstances, have either sunk into abject neglect, or burst forth into rebellion; but he has read the world a practical lesson on true greatness."

"My liege, whatever powers are in my father are yours, to use or to reserve at your gracious pleasure! His meditations in retirement are dedicated to the same end as his public acts have been—your imperial majesty's service."

The courtiers regarded each other with dismay, and Count Harrach, who had treated his brother's son as coldly as he dared, looked like the thing he was,

and knew not how to extricate himself from his dilemma. Baroness Erdenheïm began to perceive that the young Vallenstein had a noble air with him, and that the most experienced cannot always judge accurately of a man on his first presentation. We may easily conjecture that the Empress was ready to seize the tone of her imperial consort, and Casimir found the genial smile of favour succeed the neglect he had so ill brooked, as suddenly as the northern summer treads on the heels of its grim and gloomy precursor;—the ice melts, the river flows again, and the frozen waste is transformed into a verdant meadow. But he was conscious that his sovereign was indulging his kindly feelings at the expense of his political judgment; and internally, therefore, blamed himself for the petulance which had, perhaps, tended to precipitate Ferdinand into this public avowal of his sentiments, and condemned his own selfish tenacity; so that, except at

the moment when his father's praises caused his cheek to glow, and his eyes to sparkle, he neither felt nor exhibited any immoderate exultation. Princess Stel-berg, who stood behind the Empress, drew him presently to her side: she examined him for a moment with an air of mock gravity.

"I am prophesying," she said, "that you will soon be rich in friends. Count Harrach is darting upon you all the beams of his radiant countenance. The tide of fraternal tenderness has rushed back upon his heart; but at this moment his most inveterate sentiment is that of nepotism. All this is common in our atmosphere. Pray, Count, where is my rose?"

Vallensteïn blushed for his neglect of one of the simplest rules of gallantry, and began a hesitating compliment.

"Oh," said she, interrupting him with a laugh, "you left it on your pillow, I am sure! But do you know I have proved myself a better politician than

any of these state machines? I could have told them, long before Count Vallenstein appeared this morning, that all things change. Look here! you saw his Majesty summon me yesterday—he spoke to me with unusual benignity for a few minutes on the keenness of the air, and other *interesting* particulars, and then drew from his little finger this brilliant, which now sparkles on my hand. Do you think the hieroglyphic has no meaning, Count? But what ails you, man? Are you really then a youth of saturnine complexion, and do you wear the same aspect all weathers?"

"Methinks, lady," he replied, adopting the tone of his lively interrogator, "you have said enough to prove, that shifting one's aspect according to the mutation of circumstances is a mere vulgar popular fashion."

"I trust you have not adopted the Wolfsteïn cut—one cynic is enough amongst us—a second animal, as bilious

as himself, would tinge the whole court yellow."

"Wolfsteïn! I would not reflect his colour of all men in existence!"

"No, Count; because you can afford to wear your own, I imagine; but if you live till he returns amongst us, you will see how delightful all the world finds it to be insulted. For my own part, I am charmed with the Wolfsteïn, *because* every body is, except only those whom he has individually and desperately wounded, and even the bosom friends of the martyrs confine themselves to thinking it a sad pity that so glorious a genius should indulge in a *rather* too prevalent disposition to severity: however, it is impossible to help laughing, you know, and the only consideration of importance is, how each may keep the lash from his own shoulder."

"I," said Vallensteïn, "should deem the commendation of that man scandalous, and should consider myself far less

outraged by his most pointed satire; since the former I must share with the least deserving of my species; the latter, with all that is sacred and respectable."

"Hush, hush, Count! For mercy's sake, what are you about? Did ever man utter his heresies so incautiously Unless you wear some talisman, beware of his next philippic!"

"Princess!" exclaimed Casimir, in a tone of bitter indignation, "speak of him no more! He is hateful to me—and, shall I confess it, he has been *fearful!* He has implanted an exotic sentiment in my bosom, that of deadly, implacable hatred; the very mention of his name arouses within me all that is unkind and inhuman in my nature!"

"I can conceive," said the Princess, "he must be a sad nuisance to a soldier, their weapons being so dissimilar. I am told there is no forcing him to fight."

"Madam, there are few things more abhorrent to my principles than a deli-

berate single combat: he has forced me to sacrifice that principle to my resentment; but there I have cause to think him, since, but for his sang-froid, my hands," said he, shuddering, "might not be pure from the stain of premeditated murder."

"I cannot divine," said Madame de Stolberg, pertinaciously pursuing her subject, "why *we* are all so fond of him—no other man has any chance in competition with him. Can you account for it?"

And she fixed her penetrating eyes on his varying countenance; at that moment Baroness Marchfeldt entered, and the cheek of Vallensteïn was dyed of the deepest crimson: the question of the Princess sounded confusedly on his ear, but his silent agitation was the most emphatic answer it could have received.

"Oh!" exclaimed she, drawing a somewhat long breath, "I crave your pardon, Count, for pursuing a dis-

agreeable subject beyond the limits of courtesy; but I have a better excuse than thoughtlessness. You interest me, and I would soothe that perturbed spirit of yours, *if* you will let me." And her voice resumed the tenderness with which she had at first accosted him. "You do not know the comfort of a confidante, nor the advantage of possessing a pair of eyes in addition to your own, which can survey the whole game, while you are absorbed in playing your own part of it. Do not look frightened, but confide in the aid of a woman who has discernment to appreciate merit, and will to befriend it."

Vallensteïn, who had stept from the schools of Padua to his father's camp, was little accustomed to female society, and the language of friendship and confidence breathed through the lips of an accomplished woman, was not to be withstood: he repaid her with a look of silent gratitude, and was not, perhaps,

sorry the Baroness should witness his intimate intercourse with a lady, who, the Empress and herself excepted, had no superior at the Austrian court, either in the graces of her person, or the intelligence of her mind.

"Remember, Count," she said, as she quitted him, "*nos liaisons ne peuvent pas être dangereuses !*—You, poor wretch, are hooked already, and were it not so, I bear a charmed heart, too proud, and too volatile, to surrender itself to a master. I shall be a pleasanter confidante than your grandmother, and every whit as safe a one."

Count Harrach and Baron Erdenheïm advanced as she left him: with the latter he shook hands, no longer fearing to distress the old courtier by such a symptom of cordiality.

"My dear nephew," cried the former, "I am unspeakably grieved that you stood so far on ceremony as not to accompany me hither this morning. It ap-

peared to me so much matter of course, that really I waited for you at home to the latest minute. In fact," said he, dropping into an hypocritical whine, "the enthusiastic affection with which I have ever regarded my illustrious brother, the Duke of Friedland, is rendered even more tender and ardent since his nobly-borne adversity. For my part, I despise those fawning sycophants, who turn from desert to worship prosperity. While at Vienna, Casimir, consider me your father, I insist on it."

"You are too good, my kind uncle," said Vallensteïn, with an ambiguous smile; "you would suffer in the comparison. My father is in disgrace, a predicament into which Count Harrach's prudence will prevent his ever falling."

"Perhaps so, Casimir; yet permit me to say, my affinity to that disgraced man is the proudest boast of Stephen Count Harrach!" and he pressed his hand on that part of his left side where the heart

is supposed to have its residence. I know this is not the way of the world, but it is *my* way."

Much of this oration was idly wasted on the ear of him for whom it was intended; for Casimir observed that a young and very handsome nobleman was conversing with Louisa of Marchfeldt, who seemed to listen willingly, and as if she was deriving amusement from his words or their subject. Just, therefore, as Count Harrach rounded his last period—

"Pray, sir," asked Vallensteïn, abruptly, "who is that youth?"

"That," said he, "is the young Margrave of Lindau—a pretty youth—a *very* pretty youth!—well looked on at court, and a prime favourite with the ladies!—Shall I introduce him?"

"By no means, uncle; he may lack your generous predilection in favour of a man whose father is in adversity."

"True, Casimir, true! And, now you

mention it, he is, between ourselves, a *little* of the coxcomb, and when the Chevalier Wolfsteïn comes, you will see all that lively tone and manner exchanged for a dry, deliberate sneer, and that well-quilled ruff for the bare throat of a Brutus."

"Contemptible!" muttered Vallensteïn.

"Why, yes, nephew," whispered the Count; "that is just what I say. There is a servility in copying another man's dress and manner that cannot be defended; but, dear Casimir, excuse me if I give you a friendly hint—you are new here, and I consider your reputation as my own! Do not speak so loud when you happen to have occasion to mention Wolfsteïn: some barbarous satire will fall on you in consequence; for he hears whatever is said of him—nay, perhaps he may provide you with some ridiculous nickname for life."

"I feel confident he will not, sir; and

if I abstain from the mention of him, my silence will not be kept under the dread of his lash, which I perceive is so prevalent, that I blush for my countrymen."

"Why, you must consider, Casimir, that his love ballads are so beautiful, all the young ladies sing and recite them: then in his graver performances there is a *little*, just a *little*, touch of that freedom of thought which pleases our petulant youth: not that I would call him a deist, or an atheist; because I would always avoid strong language; it is unkind and illiberal, and very bad taste; but he seems *rather* to call in question the probability of there being any farther state of existence when this life closes. There are some who object to this doctrine; but for myself, I am no critic—I do not pretend to be one, and especially in matters of this description, it is rash to hazard an opinion; my court duties precluding all possibility of study."

"Ah!" thought Casimir, turning from his uncle with a gesture of horror, "well may Wolfsteïn hold the doctrine of materialism, if that thing were allowed to represent the human race."

He had not yet mustered courage to approach the Baroness of Marchfeldt; but her prolonged conversation with the Margrave made him restless: he advanced to the spot where she stood, with as much negligence of manner as he could collect—

"Baroness," said he, "you look charmingly to-day! I do not ask if you have recovered the effect of your late perils; your danger and its consequences are happily past, and you are making yourself amends by endangering others. I have thus far been profiting by my uncle Count Harrach's general maxims of caution, and admired at a prudent distance."

Louisa, who was only acquainted with Wallensteïn as a timid, dejected, hope-

less lover, knew not well what to make of this mode of attack, but replied with the same nonchalance.

"And how came you to lose sight of these wary maxims, Count? Are you abandoned by your prudence, or is the danger past?"

"Neither, madam; the danger exists in full force, and I am sensible of it; but, like a vortex or a rattle-snake, it draws me towards it with an attractive power, against which I am defenceless."

"But, for Heaven's sake!" exclaimed Lindau, in a tone of affectation, "have you been in danger, actually in danger? Do let me hear the whole story from your own sweet voice: how could you have the cruelty to let me learn it from a third person?"

"Oh!" replied the Baroness, "I recommend you to apply for the narrative to Count Casimir of Vallenstein; he is the hero of it—and," said she, with a glance which reminded him of those that

fell so coldly on his heart, on the night when he so seasonably rescued her, "I doubt not he will do himself justice."

The young Margrave now turned, and said, bowing politely to Vallensteïn, "His heroism cannot be questioned, when we consider under whose auspices it has been fostered; but I should give the Count credit for preferring to have his exploits set forth in the warblings of a lovely woman, rather than they should be slurred over by his own abridgement; for, if I do not forget, it is the Vallensteïn fashion to be brief in the mention of a victory, though Count Tilly has lately reformed that practice."

"My victories, sir," replied Casimir, as he reproachfully returned the glance of Louisa, "afford me little to expatiate on; the one alluded to partakes but too much the character of defeat."

"Ha! ha! I understand you, Count; you rescued the lady and lost your own

heart; but you should not for that reason look melancholy. Half of us have had the same accident, yet walk about, and eat, and sleep, and perform all the functions of a perfect animal, notwithstanding our deficiency in so noble a part. But by all that is piquante and beauteous,—here comes the Stolberg! Wolfsteïn says our court would be uninhabitable, if her enchanting sauciness did not give some taste to its insipidity."

The Baroness blushed, and looked consciously towards Casimir as that name was uttered, and *his* brow contracted while he thought,—Am I to hear of nothing but Wolfsteïn? Princess Stolberg, who did not lose the conclusion of Lindau's speech, nor the blush of Louisa, nor the frown of Vallensteïn, came forward and said,

"Lindau, I am ashamed of you! Look into your own mind, man, you will find ideas in plenty, lying useless; bring some of them forth for us. Nature made a

man of you, and gave you, if I mistake not, your fair proportion of original wit; why, then, should you abuse her bounty by assuming the attributes of an ape or a parrot?"

The margrave reddened.—"What do you mean, princess?"

"I mean to say that a man degrades his own tongue, when he permits it to be the eternal echo of another's sayings.—Wolfsteïn, Wolfsteïn! Your incessant commendations and repetitions are excellent proofs of *his* genius; but, pardon me, margrave, they lead one, *rather*, as Count Harrach says, to question the existence of your own. Why, man,—are you not philosopher enough to know that an echo cometh of emptiness?"

"And this from *you*, princess! You, the goddess on whose shrine some of his fragrant incense has been burned! To whom did he dedicate his verses? For whom did he bring honey from Mount Hymettus, and by whom was he in return

flattered, caressed, deified, if not by you, Princess Stolberg?"

"All true, margrave!—He was delightful, for a time; but in truth, my dear margrave, the Wolfsteïn has been multiplied through so many vile copies, that I am weary to death of him—I pine for something original. You, Lindau, for instance, might once have set up for yourself, but alas! you preferred to come forth as another man's shadow, and have made but a moderate performance even of that subordinate part: you are a bad misanthrope, and no poet. And as for your valiant professions of infidelity,—you know I *could* tell tales about that, too.—Nay, never blush, margrave; dare to seem what you are, and you will find yourself promoted."

The poor margrave knew that Princess Stolberg had detected him one evening in an obscure church on his knees before the Virgin, at a time when he was noted for his liberal and anti-devotional say-

ings, which were so successfully delivered in all good company, as to be rated only second best to Wolfsteïn's; he dared not therefore provoke her to betray him by an attempt to retort, and Vallensteïn maliciously enjoyed his embarrassment.

"Never mind my caustics," continued the unmerciful princess, "they are sure to make you smart a little; but if they remove the evil, what does that signify?"

"Quarter! Quarter, princess!" said Lindau, unbuckling his sword, and turning the hilt to the ground: a truce was instantly granted, and the lively victor walked off in the full enjoyment of her triumph.

"If it be true," said the Baroness Marchfeldt, determined that Vallensteïn should not plume himself in the supposition that she dared not utter this same name in her presence which filled every other mouth, "that the chevalier Wolfsteïn is the theme of universal admiration and imitation, it would indeed be a satire on the German taste to sup-

pose him devoid of merit;—in that case, where are we to look for a standard?"

"And if Wolfsteïn's merit is indeed worthy the universal suffrage, madam, we come to this conclusion—all we have been taught to hold sacred and honourable is a mere jest."

"But why should you be so severe, count?" said the margrave. "Some of our ecclesiastics, without scruple, lean on his arm, and laugh at his pasquinades; he *will* have his own way, you know, and he who would prevent him is sure to feel a touch in his side of the right Lernæan."

"Those of your ecclesiastics, who lean on Wolfsteïn's arm, would lean on the arm of his infernalissimo, if it were the fashion."

"Why, bless you, count! Some of them were inquisitors!"

But it was not the prattle of Lindau that occupied the thoughts or provoked the answers of Vallensteïn. He had listened to words from the lips of Louisa, which were indeed arrows dipt in the

hydra's blood, and he governed his maddened spirit with difficulty; she too looked on him with a somewhat increased expression of scorn and resentment; but at that moment his exasperation could not well be heightened: instead of deprecating her scorn, he returned and defied it; at least, at that moment he was fully persuaded that he did so. Baron Erdenheïm joined them, reminded Vallensteïn of his promise, and invited Lindau to make one of his guests at supper. That day the Duke of Bavaria had not appeared at court; no one ventured to utter a remark on his absence, save Princess Stolberg, though every one observed it, and it combined with the Emperor's reception to render young Vallensteïn an object of attention and respect.

CHAPTER X.

"Where is thy wound? Is't here?
Poo, poo, begone!
Thou can'st do nought—'tis in my head, my heart,
'Tis every where, where med'cine cannot cure."
Joanna Baillie.

At Baron Erdenheïm's supper, Vallensteïn found a goodly assemblage of nobles and ladies, with the addition of some of the most distinguished members of the university:—a fondness for literature, or an appearance thereof, was altogether necessary at the court of Vienna, and no one cared for the feast which wanted the attic salt. Princess Stolberg was not of the party, and Vallensteïn looked around for her with disappointed expectation. Baron Erdenheïm had him fast by the button, explaining to him the characters, situations, and pretensions of the several guests; and he was very patiently under-

going the detail, when he perceived that the room where they stood, and which the moment before was overflowing with company, had become nearly deserted.

"Ah!" said the Baron, "I do wrong to detain you; something more agreeable than my prosing is to be found in the next room.—Either music or dancing, no doubt."

Vallensteïn availed himself of his release, and followed the stream: it was however his lot to come in only for a general buzz of bravas and bravissimas! dolces and dolcissimas! some syren having just concluded her song. He could not easily penetrate far into the room, and did not make any material effort for that purpose, but inquired of a gentleman, who had been named to him as Professor Westermann, the cause of such rapturous acclamation. The professor was a little, intelligent-looking man, with an uncommonly vivacious cast of countenance.

"The cause, sir!" echoed he. "Upon my faith, I know not:—a Circe, a mer-

maid, for aught I know! Certain it is that never before, from any mortal form, have my organs been refreshed by such heavenly breathings;—but hark!" said he, clasping his hands, "Hark! Again! Oh, dolcissima!"

Vallensteïn, who was at first diverted with what he deemed the exaggeration of the lively professor's fancy, was soon wrapt round in ecstasy, and all he had ever read or heard of the power of music was at that moment realized in his feelings; not a whisper, not a breath was heard, till the strain ceased, but then the tumult of applause again rushed forth. The professor, especially, exhausted every phrase which might serve as the medium of the transports of dilettanti, while Vallensteïn stood in speechless emotion at his side: when Westermann had relieved himself of his own oppressive delight, he had leisure to remark the silence of his neighbour.

"Where is your soul, young man? Harmony such as this might create one,

yet *you* appear unmoved by sounds which might soothe the troubled billow, or set the wolves in our Hercynian forests dancing."

"It can be no other," murmured Vallensteïn. "Tell me, sir, I entreat, if you know *who* sings?"

"I know not her name, sir—but what are names! Enough that she is an angel, a beatitude!"

Vallensteïn now made a desperate effort to penetrate the crowd which concealed from him the source of this celestial harmony, and having effected his purpose, beheld the Baroness of Marchfeldt surrounded by a blaze of light, inhaling the delightful incense of flattery wafted from innumerable censers, and her bright and sparkling eyes betraying but too plainly that she was not quite proof against the intoxication of such a moment. Lindau, whose devotion was the certain meed of the prevailing novelty of the day, acted, as usual, the part of high priest to the reigning deity; he tuned

her harp, turned over the leaves of her book, and lisped his "exquisite, divine, adorable!" in her ear, unchecked and unforbidden. Poor moth! He was playing round the taper, rejoicing in its brightness, and reckless of the danger. Vallensteïn gazed with desperate intentness on the bright vision before him—scarce a gleam of hope mingled with his admiration, but yet he gazed: a general movement announced that supper was prepared, and hardly knowing what he did, he rushed forward and offered to take the hand of the Baroness; Lindau, surprised by the abruptness of the action, stept back, but Louisa threw her eye over Casimir with that vacant expression which leaves it doubtful if an object is perceived, and gave her hand to Lindau. That moment was fatal to each pretender; the black and bitter drop of despair fell upon the heart of Vallensteïn, while into that of the margrave a delicious poison infused itself. Lindau, in spite of his fopperies, was capable of form-

ing something like a just estimate of his own comparative merits with those of his rival, whom he beheld with generous admiration, and when he saw him advance to take the hand of Louisa of Marchfeldt, he never dreamed of competition. When, therefore, it appeared that the handsome, noble, gallant Vallenstein was rejected for him, he was immersed in wonder and exultation; his good genius never reminded him that such a thing as female caprice existed, and to love, love alone, would he refer the intoxicating preference.

Casimir believed himself hopeless ere this evening's conviction smote him, but what was it then, that now shuddered and died within him, if it was not hope? He hesitated for a moment whether to rush forth and quit the assembly, or longer to abide the suffering her presence inflicted.—"If I disappear," he said, "she will triumph; and that coxcomb,—no, I will not augment his vanity by my flight!" With this brave resolution he entered the supper-room, and found him-

self seated exactly opposite the margrave and the Baroness; the Lady Ulrica of Lindau, sister to the former, and Professor Westermann, were his neighbours. The Lady Ulrica was one of those delicate plants which seem born but to fade: a breeze might have lifted her on its wing, so slight was her form; her cheek, save a faint hectic bloom which flushed it occasionally, was of a cold, transparent white, and her large blue eyes shone with treacherous lustre: she was a lovely spectre; and as Vallensteïn regarded her, he thought on Wilhelm, and sighed. Westermann was absorbed in some interesting meditation, for he uttered to himself certain inarticulate sounds, and smiled, as though big with some happy oracle;—meanwhile, poor Vallensteïn scarcely saw any thing but the objects immediately opposite to him, and although he tried to affect indifference, he could not withdraw his attention from the assiduous devotion young Lindau was paying the Baroness, or abstain from

numbering the smiles with which these services were remunerated. A young nobleman, who sate at some little distance below, and who had been previously introduced to Vallensteïn, challenged him to drink wine with him—he complied; when the former, as if merely with the design to commence a conversation, inquired of the count, as he set down his glass, if he had read the poem Wolfsteïn had just published: he was about to reply in the negative, when Baroness Erdenheïm very abruptly diverted the attention of the querist, by asking him if the ice would yet bear his traineau: this manœuvre, for it was one, and understood to be such by the majority of the guests, took effect for the time, and the Lady Ulrica said, addressing Vallensteïn,

"It is a sad misfortune for so good-natured and well-intentioned a young man as Count Markoff, to be attended by a relentless fatality, which compels him perpetually to the utterance of some offensive blunder."

"Is he at present in that predicament, madam?"

"He would be, had not Baroness Erdenheïm happily turned the conversation. Wolfsteïn's book, amongst many other things which ought to consign it to contempt and oblivion, contains a most unprovoked attack upon your worthy neighbour the professor. Yet, why should I call it unprovoked, since Professor Westermann's life is in itself provocation sufficient."

"At what vulnerable part then does the satirist aim his dart?"

"At his heel," replied Lady Ulrica, smiling. "He attacks the little peculiarities of a good and enlightened man. The professor is remarkable for the animated pleasure with which he beholds whatever is admirable, and has addicted himself to the use of certain ejaculations expressive of his overflowing delight. Wolfsteïn has wreaked his malice upon these, proving at once his own weakness and the strength of the

man he would fain injure. Westermann has a sufficient share of genius and science to give him an honourable station among the sçavans of Europe. No man loves his muse with truer fondness, but Westermann is strong at heart: those who would behold him to the greatest advantage must follow him *home*."

The fair Ulrica spoke with an energy which almost exhausted her.

"The professor may be well content," said Casimir, "to be attacked by a fiend, for the proud privilege it has won for him of being defended by an angel! But do not the margrave and his lovely sister hold somewhat different opinions?"

"My dear brother," replied Ulrica, "has an excellent heart, but is gay and thoughtless. He has, I trust, many years before him, and reflection will follow experience; for me," added she with a sigh, "I have found it necessary to think betimes, lest thought should come too late."

Vallensteïn was deeply affected by the mournful sweetness of his interesting companion, which seemed to blossom only for the grave; and while he paused, collecting resolution to address some suitable reply to her, he felt his other neighbour touch his elbow, an interruption which not a little relieved him, and as he turned, the professor directed his attention to a paper he held in his hand below the table.

"Just run your eye over it, my dear sir," said he: "Tell me without scruple if any thing strikes you? Stay, here is my pencil! Expunge—criticise—pray don't hesitate! I shall like you the better for your candour."

Then putting the paper and pencil into the hand of Vallensteïn, he turned his shoulder upon him, and in order to leave him entire liberty for his new office, began talking rapidly with his neighbour on the other side.

"I wonder," said Vallensteïn smiling,

and looking on Lady Ulrica, " whether I may be permitted a coadjutor in my unaccustomed task?"

The professor, who had all the while an eye in his shoulder, looked back and whispered,

" Oh! yes, she is a lovely creature, and the best critic in Germany."

Thus sanctioned, the two critics scanned over the lines together, which proved to be a spirited poetical tribute to the phœnix of the hour, in return for the celestial harmony which had uplifted the professor's soul to Heaven. Ulrica, whose accurate taste had not been unjustly eulogized, took the pencil from Vallensteïn, and marked the only fault which struck her as rendering this elegant compliment imperfect; and having so done, they returned it with sincere encomiums.

" Don't expect to get off so, young man," said the professor; " I have not done with you: you have a fine deep sonorous voice; possessing great pathos

in some of its cadences, and a musical clearness. You have moreover the advantage of having scanned over my sonnet so carefully, as to be complete master of its tone and spirit; therefore I must borrow your voice, as the fittest medium through which I can offer my homage to the spirit of music."

So saying, he gave Madame Erdenheïm a hint, which informed her that the company were about to be favoured by a song or recitation; and the usual signal passed round the table, while Vallenstein was remonstrating, unheard, against being compelled into a task he was peremptorily resolved not to execute. Silence once obtained, he calmly but decidedly declined the honour intended him, and Ulrica, who perceived there was more in his refusal than a casual observer might calculate, said,

"Why, professor, surely you would not supersede my brother! He will be offended past reconciliation! If I can guess at his feelings, *he* would joyfully

hail the opportunity of uttering them in your language; he has been looking poetry all evening."

"Well, then," said Westermann, somewhat reluctantly, "will *you* speak to your brother, charming Ulrica? I have not quite forgotten his wilful murder of some of the sweetest lines I ever composed. Oh, he broke me on the wheel! Let him remember he owes me reparation."

"The boy *can* read," said Ulrica, looking affectionately at the young margrave, "and something tells me he will not murder these."

Having caught his eye, she signified the professor's wish, and the sonnet was presently in Lindau's hand; silence was already secured, and the margrave rising, went through his performance with all the spirit and energy of one whose heart is with his voice; in short, so evident and powerful was his emotion, that one might have thought him a young improvvisatore, whom love had suddenly

touched with the spirit of poetry. Applauses thundered round the table: the Baroness was covered with blushes, and ready to sink in not unpleasing confusion; her uncle and aunt were flattered by a compliment so elegant and so distinguishing to their neice; and Lindau could have hugged the professor, for having made him the happy medium of such ardent language as befitted his feelings, though, but for this fortunate inspiration, he dared not have given them words, and for the first time in his life, perhaps, his vanity was forced to yield precedence to a still more potent sentiment; in short, he was less occupied in considering how *he* looked, how *he* read, and what *tout le monde* thought of *him*, than what she felt; and as he re-seated himself silently by her side, he beheld with tender pity the embarrassment in which, for a moment, she was overwhelmed.

"Ah! I said he would not murder

these lines," exclaimed Ulrica: "and surely a more animated and natural recitation never was delivered."

Vallensteïn could not speak: he knew not whether to blame himself for renouncing the task which had been so admirably executed by Lindau, or whether he should not have run the hazard of incurring tenfold mortification by betraying his inextinguishable passion, not only still farther to its haughty insensible object, but to every spectator. Westermann felt his brows encircled by the well-earned laurel, and owned all the rapture so natural to the sanguine character of the genuine poet, when he feels his own triumphs identified with those of the good, the lovely, or the glorious. Count Markoff, who had taken a powerful fancy for Vallensteïn, and was resolved, if possible, to draw him into conversation, was, by this poetical tribute, again unluckily reminded of Wolfsteïn's book.

"I think, Count," said he, "you did

not favour me with your opinion of the work just published by Wolfsteïn?"

"I have never read it, sir, nor ever mean to read it."

Lindau, whose thoughts were in a state of tumult, and who did not pause to recollect himself, cried,

"Why not, Count? You will gain by changing your mind; it is one coruscation of wit."

"Then the impious ingratitude of the author is the more detestable in perverting such a gift to such base uses."

The professor was silently amusing himself by witnessing the fruitless efforts of his good host and hostess, aided by some of the guests, to turn the tide of conversation into a different channel; and in order somewhat to relieve the confusion under which he beheld them labouring, he himself addressed to the Lady of Marchfeldt the same question with which the unconscious Markoff had persecuted Vallensteïn. The Baroness, ignorant of the

manner in which her interrogator was treated in this same book, answered, rather timidly, in the affirmative, for, only that it was the fashion for the German ladies to read without scruple whatever was published, the work in question was not, it must be confessed, calculated to purify or exalt the mind through which its ideas were permitted to flow, and Louisa, though she would not deny the fact, could not help blushing for it, while her eye involuntarily sunk beneath the stern and pointed rebuke which that of Casimir aimed at her.

"And what, fair lady," pursued the professor, "is your opinion of its merits?"

"One cannot but deeply lament the irregularities of so transcendant a genius," sighed the Baroness.

"I should have thought," said Vallensteïn, his whole indignant soul in his countenance, "I should have thought no female eye could trace that composition of malice and licentiousness,

without a stronger feeling towards the author than compassion. Surely, surely, I must have been deceived in its tendencies."

"Oh," said Lindau, "his audacity gives many of our pietists the better hope of him—he is training for La Trappe, be assured!"

"At all events," observed the Baroness, who the more keenly felt the words of Vallensteïn, from a consciousness that they were not unmerited, and who was, therefore, doubly exasperated by them. "I would sooner confide in the man who walks about in his own likeness, disdaining to deceive his fellow creatures, than in the more plausible criminal who covers a false and hollow bosom with fair and amiable pretences. I should think, perhaps, more harshly of Wolfsteïn, were I not assured that such counterfeits pass current."

It was impossible for Vallensteïn to err in the application of this speech: the tone in which it was uttered was too em-

phatic, and the look which accompanied it too significant; his conscience armed him in vain, his heart bled beneath the stroke and fainted within him, tears sprung into his eyes, and he shook in every limb.

"Mother of Heaven!" he ejaculated in a thick and smothered voice, "who can bear this!"

"What ails you, sir?" said the professor, turning in alarm at the exclamation, and hastily pouring wine into his glass: "drink this, sir," said he, "you are ill,—no doubt the ice has disordered you."

"Where is your pain?" asked Ulrica, compassionately, shocked at the agony his countenance betrayed.

"Here, madam!" said he, wildly, pressing his hand against his heart; and, without waiting to apologise, he rushed from the room, and from the mansion, and was quickly restored to the solitude of his own apartments.

"Bless me!" exclaimed Baroness

Erdenheïm, startled by the noise his precipitate exit caused, "what is the matter with young Count Vallensteïn?"

"I fear he is taken extremely ill," said the professor; "never in my life did I see anguish more forcibly depicted on a countenance,—his whole features were distorted by it! Surely some one ought to follow him."

"He has, I am informed," said Madame Erdenheïm, unwilling that the fair arrangement of her table should be farther broken, "a prodigious retinue; and amongst them his own physician, a man of high character."

Meanwhile the feelings of Louisa of Marchfeldt were not the most enviable. She could not acquit herself of having struck a deliberate blow; and now, like many a murderer, she too late deplored the effect of her own cruelty, and could not but pity the visible torture she had inflicted on her victim. Ulrica had not heard the whole speech which preceded Vallensteïn's sudden indisposition; but

she remarked the changing colour of her opposite neighbour; she remembered too the singular obstinacy with which the Count had refused to read her panegyric; and she was convinced that the expression of his countenance as he quitted the table, and the action by which he replied to her inquiry, "Where is your pain?" had reference to no corporeal sufferings.

"I doubt," whispered she to the professor, "that poor young man's misery does not come within the province of his physician; his heart is the seat of the malady, and, if I mistake not, I have the cause in my eye."

"The cause of such grievances is apt to be found in the eye of a young lady,' returned the professor, who could not resist the quibble, "but I see what you mean—there is guilt apparent! Well, well, such things will happen; and how would life's drama go on without them? It is only a little fuming, and fretting, and tossing, and all will be adjusted: as for that handsome, gallant, manly fellow

having reason to despair, I'll not believe a word of it! He and his fair tyrant are made for each other."

"Yet, I think," said Ulrica, "she does not discourage my brother's homage, and never have I seen him so fascinated before. Poor Frederic! if she is only playing off a little of the artillery of caprice on the youth she has just sent wounded hence, what will become of Frederic, who, if I mistake not, is quite conquered?"

"My dear," said Westermann, "Lindau was born at court; his heart and Vallenstein's, both good ones, are of different texture: your brother will never die for love—he will let his beard go unshaven as long as he can, I dare say, without being a fright, a compliment he would not pay to the Paphian goddess herself; and then he will parody some of his friend Wolfsteïn's love laments,—and then, why then—I know not what he can do, unless he falls in love again."

CHAPTER XI.

"But these are all lies! Men have died from time
to time,
And worms have eaten them, but not for love."

It was near a fortnight after the gala at Baron Erdenheïm's, ere Vallensteïn began to recover from a fever, into which intense perturbation of mind had thrown him. When he was once more sensible, and capable of reflection, and when the cause of his illness returned distinctly to his recollection, he regretted the stupor in which his senses had been wrapped; still the very weakness of his frame prevented the revival of memory from bringing with it that acute sensation which might have endangered a relapse. For the first two days of the return of consciousness, he betrayed it only by signs; he pressed the hand of Desmond affectionately, and closed his eyes, as if to indicate his desire of remaining unmolested; an intimation

which was implicitly complied with. The first words he spoke convinced his attendants of the perfect restoration of his mental powers.

" Let all," said he, " leave the apartment to Desmond and me. I have waited patiently for this moment; and believe me," added he, addressing his physician, " I am not anticipating my strength—you may trust me."

The doctor felt his pulse, and acquiesced immediately in his patient's request.

" Dear Desmond," said he, when they were alone, " you went, I remember, with the Emperor's despatches to my father—you have no doubt delivered them. How were they received?"

" With joy, my lord, which could not be dissembled, and his highness the Duke condescended to treat the bearer with much distinction. I have despatches for you when you are able to examine them, and brought a packet for you to deliver to the Emperor; but as it contained matter which, as your

noble father told me, might not brook delay, when on my return I found you to all appearance at the gates of death, I ventured so far to exceed my commission as to deposit them myself in the hands of his imperial majesty."

"Right, right, Desmond.—How long have I been ill?"

"Above a fortnight, my lord."

"And to what cause do you attribute my illness?" said he, looking fixedly in Desmond's face, which reddened as he replied,

"To the cause which overthrew the house of Priam—to the cause which lost Mark Antony his moiety of the world—to a woman!"

"And is this opinion confined to your own breast, or do others partake it?"

"My lord, I will not deceive you; no one holds any other."

A long pause ensued; at length—

"Methinks," said Vallenstein, "I have had many attendants:—tell me who have been about me."

"Father Felix, the confessor of the Baroness of Marchfeldt, who has rarely quitted your bedside; I found him there on my return. My first impulse, on beholding him, was suspicion and resentment, but the mild piety of the old man disarmed me; and, in truth, he has watched over you like a guardian angel. Conrade, too, has been here from time to time."

"But who else?" said Vallenstein, with half fretful anxiety. "I am quite sure there was likewise another."

"There was another, my lord; and one who, in the powers of alleviation, excelled us all. No doubt it is the sister of the order of Mercy for whom you inquire."

"A nun of the order of Mercy!—Was she not often near me?"

"She was most tenderly assiduous; yet other duties would oblige her to quit you sometimes for hours. When she was here, her skill and adroitness induced all to give way to her."

"Was she tall and fair?"

"She was tall, but of a brown complexion; her eyes were always veiled after their manner.—But what of that, my lord?"

"I know not, Desmond; it is mere idle curiosity.—When comes she again?"

"She looked on you yesterday as you slept; and, finding the favourable change which had taken place in you, she breathed a prayer over you, and retired, signifying that her ministry was ended."

"Enough, dear Desmond, I would sleep; let no one speak near me."

He did not, however, resign himself to slumber, but to thoughts almost equally refreshing; the sister of Mercy still glided before his eyes.

"Ah!" thought he, "cruelty has been too long exercised; it is time that mercy should succeed. She was brown, they say—but what of that? Can I be dull enough to suppose she would venture hither undisguised? No! her delicacy and dignity were carefully pro-

tected during this work of clemency, by the sanction of her holy confessor, and the guardian arm of her trusty Conrade."

As he turned his head upon his pillow, he felt something tighten uneasily about his throat, and, on examination, he found that a ribbon chain, with a golden heart appended to it, was tied round his neck. —He examined the trinket with indescribable interest; and, in so doing, touched a spring which opened the heart, and discovered a small lock of dark chesnut hair. This revelation somewhat perplexed and entangled the train of his musings, for by what sophistry could he reconcile this tress with the head from which he would fain persuade himself it was severed? The infatuation of a lover is of all subjects the most trite and fruitful in examples; there is no reasoning upon it, because it is a matter entirely beyond the jurisdiction of reason. Somehow or other Vallensteïn satisfied himself, by its aid, that this little bit of dark chesnut hair had

been taken from amongst the light auburn ringlets which curled over the ivory forehead of Louisa of Marchfeldt; and had any one attempted to argue the matter with him, he would, no doubt, have lamented his want of strength to knock down so flagrant a delinquent; but against any such offensive reasoning Vallensteïn wisely guarded himself, by hoarding the secret of the golden heart in his bosom, and sharing it with no living creature. Louisa of Marchfeldt, meanwhile, had not passed unpunished; she knew that Casimir, the ostensible friend of her deceased brother, was dangerously ill, and had too much reason to tax herself as the cause. She could not conceive how mere mortified pride could produce the agonizing effect she had witnessed, and she was puzzled to guess what motive could induce such a man as the young Count Vallensteïn to expose himself to the humiliating pity of the court, as a rejected and despairing lover, if there was not within him some genuine

and overwhelming feeling, which all his manhood was powerless to resist. Be this as it might, the daily accounts of his danger agitated and terrified her, and banished repose from her pillow. She could not, and did not, oppose the desire of the good Felix, to attend the suffering Vallensteïn; and her permission, to the same effect, was readily accorded to Conrade, who, next to her and the memory of his master, loved his master's friend. From them she learned every symptom of the unfortunate Vallensteïn's malady, and from their simple, unwarped representations, it became manifest to her, that whatever might have been his original views respecting her, his whole nature had now become imbued with an absorbing, pervading, and irradicable sentiment, of which she was the object. She, with Wolfsteïn and Wilhelm, were the personages who peopled his visions: he called incessantly, in the tenderest accents, on the latter, to behold how his friend was sacrificed

to treachery, and conjured him to open the eyes of his sister. The Baroness was no coquette, nor was it in her heart to exult in a conquest of this nature; she was unfeignedly and deeply afflicted at the state in which Vallenstïen lay, and trembled for the result; yet she knew that the whole court attributed his danger to her severity, and dreaded to confirm the notion, by betraying the slightest symptom of the uneasiness which preyed upon her. She was constant, therefore, in attendance at court; where-ever the noble and the gay assembled, there was the Baroness of Marchfeldt; she danced at balls, and sung at concerts, and permitted the splendid traineau of the Margrave of Lindau to bear her over the frozen waters of the Danube; for a traineau party by torch-light was now become the seasonable and fashionable amusement of Vienna.

The affairs of the imperial house, meanwhile, wore every day a more inauspicious appearance. Tilly had expe-

rienced a defeat; and the Emperor, having offered peace to Gustavus, had been answered by that spirited monarch, "that when he was cured of the wound inflicted by an eagle's claw he should be able to think of peace, and not till then." Thus the thoughts of Ferdinand were more and more directed to that ever successful general, in whose genius and resources his faith was unlimited; and he only waited a secure occasion for re-instating him in all those powers and honours, whereof he had most reluctantly deprived him. The present unfavourable state of the war had lowered the tone of those men whose measures had tended to produce it; and Ferdinand now ventured to look on them with the air of one who felt himself the victim of weak or evil counsellors. Even Bavaria, whose once invincible general had sustained a signal defeat, carried himself with somewhat diminished haughtiness.

Before Vallensteïn quitted his confinement, and presented himself once more

in public, he confessed himself to Felix. The good father was interested and edified by the shrift of his young penitent; for seldom could a soldier of six and twenty have exhibited so clean a bosom. This important rite having been duly performed, Vallensteïn set himself on a diligent perusal of his father's despatches; they contained many state papers in cypher, and directions as to their various allotment, accompanied by the following letter:—

"You have nobly justified my confidence. During the few days you have sojourned in the Austrian court, you have so happily borne yourself as to have already very materially assisted my plan of operations; in short, I could not have been more effectively represented, and it is with pride and delight I perceive that your person is no less acceptable to the Emperor than your mission. Hold your position steadily only for a short time, and then we have the game in our hands! The affairs of the empire

are in glorious disorder: Gustavus is pushing on without obstacle, and it is written in my horoscope that I only can prescribe him his limits. Now, Casimir, a word for yourself:—I will not insult you with a suspicion that, initiated as you are in the solemn mysteries of ambition, you can spare a glance to the toys of your boyhood. I will therefore, without farther preamble, tell you what the maintenance of our present happy posture demands from you. It has become a desirable point with me to regain Wolfsteïn. You will say the task is not easy, but I will teach you how it may be accomplished without trouble. Every man has his ruling passion—the master-key by which his bosom may be entered. Wolfsteïn's is the vanity of a poet; address yourself to that, and you have him. Of course your penchant for the heiress of Marchfeldt no longer troubles your repose, since you have had small leisure for such trifling; and I am told she has thought fit to treat you with an insolence

such as no manly breast could for a moment brook. I therefore demand no sacrifice from you, in expecting that you will leave to Wolfsteïn that which you do not possess, and which, without degradation, you cannot persist in pursuing. We must bribe those whom we would make our agents, and Wolfsteïn will be cheaply bought, if a little empty flattery, and the apparent resignation of an insolent capricious girl, will purchase him. *Allons, mon fils!—A la gloire!* "FRIEDLAND."

It may, perhaps, puzzle the reader, when he is informed that a correct and verbatim copy of this letter was already in the hands of Wolfsteïn, who was amusing himself in conjecturing its effect on the haughty spirit and open heart of his rival; whom, however, he scarcely deigned to consider any longer in that light, since the scene at Baron Erdenheïm's table, and its consequences, had been described to him. At present his mind was exclusively swayed by the desire of obtaining Louisa of Marchfeldt;

to this point he resolved, for awhile, to concentrate his views, and either by craft or violence to secure his object. He harboured not, in fact, a doubt of success;—his emissaries reported to him faithfully every word she uttered;—he knew she was surrounded by the papillons of the court, and suffered them to flutter their gaudy wings around her;—he knew that the handsome, gallant, lively Lindau sighed, ogled, and sonnetised, and even presumed to hope; but all this rather helped to confirm his security. He had studied Louisa, and he knew that Frederic Lindau was no rival for him; Vallensteïn was the only man whose influence could have alarmed him, and now he believed himself safe even there.

The Emperor had twice visited the sick chamber of Vallensteïn *incog.* and had testified the most gracious interest in his recovery; he had condescended to glance at the supposed cause of his illness, and to hint that if the interference

of the Empress with the Lady of Marchfeldt might be efficacious, it should be tried. Casimir was, however, too proud for the adoption of such a measure; and, although he thanked his imperial master with all suitable humility, he discovered an unconquerable repugnance to avail himself even of the good offices of so exalted an ally in a matter which he rightly believed could only be transacted between heart and heart.

The young Count came forth again amongst his friends, amid the sunshine of smiles and the music of many welcomes. Imperial favour now shone full upon him, without the intervention even of that thin cloud with which state policy had, for a moment, veiled it. Lovely eyes dwelt on him tenderly; and there were few amongst the vain and the ambitious who did not envy him. They, alas! saw only the sparkling of his cup, but guessed not that one bitter drop was sufficient to poison the whole draught. When he entered the imperial circle, for

the first time on his convalescence, Ferdinand led him instantly to the Empress, who expressed, in the sweetest and most flattering accents, her joy at his recovery. Princess Stolberg, from whom he expected the foremost greeting, was the last who approached; but Vallenstein was quickly convinced, that not one of those who preceded her had uttered their congratulations from a more genuine source. She scarcely spoke of his illness, but a little falter in the voice, a little heightening of the colour of the cheek, and a transient dimness of the eye, lent to her brief "I am glad to see you, count!" a tenfold meaning.

"I am sure of it, my charming friend," said he; "and, that you are so, gives an added value to returning health. But what is become of your roses? You are paler than when we last met."

"Ah!" said she, "I am in love, I suppose! For, apropos, count—*you* have made it the fashion—nobody can appear at court who is not in love. All our ac-

complished youth, who, till you came, guessed not that aught was wanting to complete their perfections, are now practising the sigh à la Vallensteïn. But what on earth could betray you into the public expression of your misplaced passion for that unfeeling Baroness? But perhaps it is as well, after all; the transient humiliation, the jest of the hour, all that passes, all that is a trifle if you have but recovered your senses; and I will not believe that such a superb creature as you are can possess so little power over the action of his will as to continue chained to the triumphal car of that disdainful woman."

"Ah, princess! the heart of that woman is my summum bonum, and, even yet, I do not despair of gaining it!"

"Her heart, count! I would as lief hear you talk of finding the philosopher's stone,—they are, I believe, equally nonentities! But I tell you candidly, you have destroyed your last chance;—your

only game was to mortify her vanity, and by one fatal exhibition of your weakness you have fed it to repletion. You stood the helpless mark of her barbarities, and in deliberate sport she pierced you through and through with arrows, to display her skill to the company. You shrink, Vallenstein,—but I am acting the part of a faithful friend: ere we cure the wound, we must probe it."

"But I have reason to suspect, that Louisa,—that the Baroness *has* a heart, and that its pity, at last, has reached even to me.—Is not pity sometimes the precursor of a still kinder sentiment?"

"In truth, I have heard so;—but she has given you proofs of pity, has she?"

"I think,—I believe so."

"Will you trust them to my investigation?"

"I am hardly certain it would be honourable."

"Well, count, I will not press it;—but, if Louisa of Marchfeldt has a heart,

and in that heart there resides love, pity, or sympathy,—then I will believe the Medicean Venus has the fellow to it."

The subject of their conference entered at that moment, and with her, her shadow, the Margrave of Lindau. The situation of the Baroness was distressing, and she felt it so. She knew that the eyes of the whole circle were prepared to scan and criticise her demeanour and its effect. That her heart, for she had one, in spite of Princess Stolberg's belief to the contrary, had softened towards Vallenstein, and that she beheld his pale countenance and attenuated frame with remorse, was certain; but she was equally averse from the thought of inflicting any farther wound by the coldness of her manner, or creating any delusive hopes by its gentleness.

"Perhaps," thought she, "he will mark his sense of what has passed by determined avoidance, and to that chance I must trust for extrication from my embarrassments."

It was not long, however, ere Vallenstein and she found themselves, as it were, accidentally near each other:—Louisa was indeed, at the moment, taken by surprise, for she was not aware, till their eyes met, of his vicinity; and the delight of Vallensteïn was extreme on perçeiving the emotion which instantly betrayed itself in her countenance as she faltered,

"I rejoice, sir, that your indisposition has left you, and that you are restored to your friends."

He waited not to analyse the nature of this emotion; enough for him, that she started and changed colour at his approach, and that her eye no longer carried to his heart the chilling language of repulse. Instead, therefore, of the haughty, reproachful return for which the conscious Louisa was prepared, she quickly perceived that Vallensteïn had risen from the couch of sickness, to which her treatment consigned him, still more inextricably the slave of her fascinations. Frederic Lindau, who was in truth a very

good-natured youth, and who was quite sure that the Count had been condemned to suffer for his sake, was engaged in carefully adjusting his behaviour to that nice balance, which might secure him from wounding the feelings of his defeated rival, either by an expression of compassion, which might offend his pride, or an appearance of exultation in his own more prosperous success, which might be construed into ungenerous triumph; while, in fact, no one thought about him, for Casimir, although he would have given much for but one of those smiles which he so easily obtained, never for a moment vouchsafed to regard him as a rival. Poor Lindau's study had a most unhappy effect; his lively foppery, which became him well, being exchanged for a solemn ostentation of forbearance, which provoked the anger of Louisa, and excited the smile of less concerned spectators, while it was all lost on him for whose advantage it was designed. As the group separated, "Poor fellow!" exclaimed the

Margrave, "I pity him from the centre of my soul!"

"Pity whom?" asked the Baroness.

"Why, Vallensteïn:—do you not see to what a shadow your frown has shrunk him?—He has the arrow in his side, Baroness! I would not be that man for all his father's dukedoms!"

"I should think," retorted the Lady of Marchfeldt, "that if all his father's possessions were limited to a square tower on the banks of the Danube, even then, Casimir of Vallensteïn might be a fair mark for the envy of the most accomplished courtier in the Emperor's circle! Now, how can you, Lindau, indulge yourself in such a gasconade? How can you talk of pitying Vallensteïn?"

The Margrave felt that she had not expended all her arrows; she meant, indeed, that the rebuke should not fall pointless, for she began to weary of the young courtier's presumptions, and to think it might be for her dignity to repress them.

Ere the dispersion of the company the Emperor beckoned Vallensteïn, and the Duke of Bavaria advancing at the same moment, Ferdinand mutually introduced them.

"His highness," said his Imperial Majesty, "is disposed to coalesce with the measures which the situation of the empire render necessary, and I trust all my friends will now evince their loyalty by cordial and sincere co-operation."

There was something in the look of Maximilian which did not answer for his cordiality, but he received young Vallensteïn with forced politeness, and more at such a juncture could hardly be expected from him. After a few words of ceremony he retired, when the Emperor, drawing Casimir beyond the circle, imparted to him the important intelligence, that all things were finally arranged for his father's reinstatement in all his powers and honours; and signified that Prince Schaumberg would set off for Prague the following day, invested with the fullest credentials for that purpose.

CHAPTER XII.

"Say that some lady, as perhaps there is,
Has for your love as great a pang of heart
As you have for Olivia."

Shakspeare.

Princess Stolberg, who openly professed her friendship for young Vallenstein, was, as matter of course, the avowed partisan of his house, and resolved to be the first who should celebrate the triumph of the Duke of Friedland; in whose honour she announced a masquerade and supper at her apartments for the following evening. This entertainment was to be considered a test of the temper of the court, and those who avoided appearing at it tacitly declared themselves malcontents. The party given by Princess Stolberg, therefore, was a subject of infinite interest not only to the gay and the dissipated, but to the politicians of the

hour, and the Emperor and Empress not only graced the festivities with their presence, but resolved to mingle in them; for the late arrangements had lifted from the bosoms of the Imperial pair the insupportable weight of care and anxiety which had borne down their spirits.

It was long since so superb and distinguished a fête as the one now anticipated had been given; for the nobles and electors had divided and subdivided into parties and factions, and mistrust and jealousy had for some time saddened th German capital. The Empress, to mark her approbation of the part Princess Stolberg took in the present revolution, permitted her the use of an ample and magnificent suite of state apartments, adjoining those which, as first lady of the key, she occupied in the palace, in order that nothing might be wanting to the splendour of the gala. The platonic attachment subsisting between the Princess and Vallensteïn placed them on the most confidential footing; and, when the

former perceived the entrance of two Tyrolese hunters, she recognised immediately her friend and his secretary, Desmond, whose habits she had herself selected. She was dressed as a Spanish girl, with her guitar: the Emperor and Empress were well content to divest themselves for a few hours of the cumbrous trappings of royalty, and appeared in the humble attire of a Venetian gondolier and his wife; and Louisa of Marchfeldt, at the recommendation of her Imperial mistress, assumed, on the other hand, the ermine robe and regal diadem, which became her as her appropriate garb. It would be endless to enumerate the groups of Chinese, Turks, Tartars, Moors, devils, conjurors, zingari, figuranti, harlequins, Circassians, angels, fairies, grandees, and peasants, nuns and ecclesiastics, who enlivened and diversified the motley scene. A general spirit of harmony seemed to have diffused itself over the heterogeneous multitude; and Princess Stolberg had the satisfaction to

remark, that the number of those bidden to her feast, who by their absence implied discontent, were few indeed. Vallensteïn was in high spirits; the golden heart acted as a powerful talisman to heighten the zest of every pleasure, to give new value to every triumph, and to lull to rest every perturbing thought. Early in the evening he ventured to approach the object of his hopes, and met a benign and gracious reception.

"I did not expect, Count," she said, "to see the real hero of this splendid hour equipt so humbly; but true greatness may defy any disguise, and that, no doubt, is your axiom."

"Alas, lady! the humility of my garb well suits the level of my hopes! Many an honest, light-hearted mountaineer would make an ill exchange with the hero of this night's revels; yet one wave of your majesty's sceptre, and Europe would not hold a man so great and so happy."

As he looked anxiously beneath the

mask, which shaded the upper part of her countenance, and awaited her reply, he felt his shoulder touched by a Dominican friar, and, angry at the interruption, said somewhat hastily,

"What would you, father?"

The monk just raised his cowl, and revealed the features of Wolfsteïn.

"Vallensteïn," said he, in a friendly tone, "I have been seeking you. Come, come, man! it is time to put an end to our mock quarrel,—I am tired of it! and, besides, I have something to say to you, a message from your father: I come from Prague, and hearing the Vallensteïn triumph was celebrating, weary traveller as I am, I would not be absent."

Louisa did not behold the countenance of the Dominican, but she heard the words, and in no spot on the wide and populous globe could that voice have sounded on her ear unrecognized. For the instant, surprise and consternation chained her where she stood; but, on

recovering her presence of mind, she attempted to retreat; the crowd, however, pressing near her, she was compelled to remain stationary long enough to hear the whole of Wolfsteïn's address to Vallensteïn, she, meanwhile, supposing herself undiscovered by him. When at length she escaped to a distance from the singular being, in whose influence over her destiny she had acquired almost an implicit belief, she paused to reflect on the measure she had best adopt.

"Shall I retire immediately, and secure myself from the risk of meeting him this evening? Should I do so, my evasion will be the theme of general speculation—he will argue from it that I fear him, and although by flight this evening I might procrastinate the rencontre, happen it must; for Wolfsteïn will be every where."

She was confined entirely to her own resources, for in this assembly no one shared her secrets; and whether her re-

maining was the result of sound reflection, or of that fatal influence in which she was inclined to believe, it is impossible now to determine; we will, therefore, return to Wolfsteïn and Vallensteïn. The former, ere his stunned and baffled rival could shake off his astonishment, drew from beneath his gown a packet, which he advised Vallensteïn to conceal in his bosom.

"They are private," said he, "and only for your own eye: consume them when perused."

All these proofs of intimate confidence reposed in this man by his father confounded the senses of Vallensteïn; he could scarcely believe himself awake, or that it was indeed Wolfsteïn with whom he conversed.

"It seems, sir," said he, "you would fain persuade me that all the past is a dream; that the deep, intense, inveterate enmity which has reigned mutually between us, and which has instigated you to the

foulest villanies, and has kindled in my bosom the most inextinguishable resentment, is a joke."

"Exactly," said Wolfsteïn; "you take my meaning precisely, and were you a philosopher, as I am, you would see nothing strange in the expectation. The past *is* a dream, a mere empty vision! Whether, in passing, it was real or imaginary is of little consequence: suffice it for us, that it is now nothing. But let us not mistake each other. It has suited me to serve the views of your father, and he trusts me: the indulgence of my antipathy to you amused me for a time; but all things weary, and I cannot fatigue myself by perplexing you farther."

"Of course, sir, you relinquish all pretence to the hand of the Baroness of Marchfeldt!—you have awakened from that dream likewise!"

"So far I have awaked from it, that I consider all that has passed there, too, as nothing: we shall begin again as new ac-

quaintance; but she is an object worthy my pursuit, and I shall pursue her. We will start fair, Count; if indeed you yet consider your chance worth trying for."

"And is it possible, Wolfsteïn, you can, after the detection of your base and wicked deception, think so meanly of Louisa to encourage a hope of success?"

"Oh, no!" said the Chevalier, with a diabolical smile, "I am not so presumptuous to hope. Hope supposes insecurity—I am *certain*. But this is mere trifling; our boyish frolics are not worth remembrance. I looked to have found in you a supple statesman, involved in cabinet mysteries, your head full of mighty projects, victories, alliances, dethronements, revolutions! And, lo! I find you mewling out a love-tale about Louisa of Marchfeldt, like some beardless shepherd of Arcadia! I believed you had done with such nonsense. Well, I will not cross you—destiny, not I, must answer for your failure. Will you give me your hand, Vallensteïn?"

"Never, Wolfsteïn!"

"Be it as you will," said the Chevalier, in a graver tone: "it is a pity, nevertheless. You are playing like a child over the aspic's nest—take warning! Believe me, I have dreadful means of destruction—when my hour of awaking arrives, I shall confound the incredulous! Let us now separate; for I advise you not to tempt me farther till you have read the Duke's despatches."

Vallensteïn laid little stress on this parting threat; he supposed it implied merely that his father had repeated and enforced his injunctions to cultivate the friendship of Wolfsteïn, and to yield up to him his hopes of the Baroness; measures to which even the most peremptory command would never have stretched his filial duty, in spite of the love and reverence in which he held him from whom it emanated. His first impulse was to seek Louisa, and obtain from her at least a hearing; but as he wandered round the room in search of her, he met

the Princess Stolberg unmasked, who, placing her arm within his, drew him from the crowd.

"You were," said she, "looking eagerly for some one: was it your friend and Mentor you so assiduously sought? Let us seek a cooler apartment."

They entered a recess representing a mermaid's cave, lined with shells, coral, and fuci. The genius of this submarine grot had deserted it to frolic amongst the inhabitants of the upper world, and the fair Spaniard and the Tyrolese took advantage of her absence, to hold their conference free from the invasion of curious listeners.

"Who is the Dominican by whom you were so deeply engaged, and by what theme did he so effectually and unpleasantly rivet your attention?"

"How did you discover that he did so?"

"Because I marked you closely. Do you think no feature but the eye betrays the workings of the mind? The mouth,

even in its apparent silence, is an equal tell-tale. The cowl of your companion disguised him effectually, yet I suspect I know him—it was Wolfsteïn."

"You have guessed right, Princess."

"For your sake, my dear Vallensteïn, I rejoice in his arrival."

"You rejoice for my sake! You are inexplicable, Princess, or treating me with most unseasonable irony."

"No, my friend, I cannot jest with you on these matters; but his presence will bring your affairs to a crisis—you will be cured—all medicine is unpalatable, but it *must* be swallowed! One dose of coloquintida awaits you, and then adieu to your pining malady! You shall even thank your physician."

"It is plain, madam, you persist in thinking, not only that I ought to relinquish all hope of obtaining the Baroness, but that the wretch Wolfsteïn is secure of his victim! Speak it at once, madam, is this what you mean?"

"Alas! it is, dear Vallensteïn! I can-

not bear to see your misery, and I detest alike all that cause it."

"But, madam, you are deceived," said Vallensteïn, affecting a tone of composure, "I can produce proof of it; nay, had not that bane of all social enjoyment this night interrupted me, I was in the very act of making a decisive declaration, receiving a decisive sentence. My heart presaged all that was good; never did it swell so high with hope, when that fiend stood between us, and"——

"Vallensteïn, Vallensteïn! how cruelly you deceive yourself! Had not the sentence you so yearned to hear been suspended, at this moment not a hope had been left alive in your bosom."

"That point, madam, shall be quickly ascertained; this night shall end the conflict!"

And he started from his seat, and would have rushed back to seek Louisa amongst the crowd.

"Be patient one moment, I conjure you, Casimir! You talk of proofs; have

you really proofs? Confide them to me; I will not betray you!"

"This instant, madam;" and, his hands trembling with agitation, he unfastened from his neck the ribbon, to which hung the golden heart, and placed it reproachfully in her hands.

"No, madam! I am not such a coxcomb to build my hopes on the weak foundation of my own presumption; but if this is not a token of woman's love, what is it?"

"I believe it is, indeed, a token of woman's love. From whom did you receive it?"

"From whom *could* I receive it? From Louisa."

"Ah! that is *indeed* decisive! And when?"

"Ah, Princess! that bosom you deem so cold and insensible is the bright abode of every virtue; gentleness, compassion, all that makes woman lovely! Concealed in the humble garb of a sister of Mercy, that angel ministered daily by

my couch, smoothed my restless pillow, and lulled me with seraph hymns to repose. What a tyrant is sickness, that the mind should be enchained and stupefied by it, in defiance of a charm potent enough, one should believe, to call the dead to life! She glided around my couch, and I remained reckless of her presence; yet, when I recovered, a vague, indefinite, recollection of something infinitely sweet and gentle kept haunting my thoughts, but the reality had vanished."

"Truly, a very marvellous story, Vallensteïn! It was, depend on it, the Lady of Marchfeldt's ghost; since, during your illness, her corporeal moiety was visible elsewhere, morn, noon, and night, I believe. Instead of hymning you to sleep, she was employed in helping to keep all that was noble and gay in Vienna awake; and, while her spectre was gliding about your couch, the woman herself was gliding over the frozen bosom of the Danube, in Frederic Lindau's traineau. I have often told you she had no heart in her, and now

it is plain enough that her body and soul are not always in the same place."

"You are so prejudiced, Princess, there is no comfort in talking to you."

"Don't be angry, Vallensteïn! For though there is something very unaccountable in the gift of ubiquity possessed by the Lady of Marchfeldt, your hopes do not depend on establishing that matter, since she has left in your hands this palpable and substantial token of her favour."

She touched the spring and opened the heart; she considered the tress for a moment."

"Bless me!" cried she, "how one may be deceived! I am now pretty well convinced that the lady I saw at court, during your illness, surrounded by lovers and bards, dancing like Terpsichore, singing like Saint Cecilia, and looking like a youthful Juno, was not after all the Baroness of Marchfeldt, for *she* had bright fair hair, a sort of glittering amber colour; but this ringlet of the Lady Louisa's is a dark glossy chestnut."

This remark seriously disconcerted Vallenstein.

"Do you call this chestnut colour?" said he. "I confess it *did* strike me that it was somewhat darker than Louisa's hair —but yet, it is not chestnut surely! Besides, to whom else can it possibly belong? Does not the hair sometimes darken when it is cut from the head?"

"Such natural phenomena may occur to lovers perhaps, but I cannot say that ever an instance of such a fact presented itself to me. However, you can consult Professor Pillenberg."

"It is your delight, Princess, to make me miserable, to cut off my hopes, and insult over my disappointment."

"Oh, Vallenstein! would I could rescue you from a false and ruinous illusion! I could not have believed that love could so have warped the natural faculties of a man! Why, Count, you are become not only mentally and metaphorically blind, but, positively, you cannot see! Call this branch of coral an

orange tree, and it will not prove more incontestably the error of your senses, than your belief that this tress of dark hair ever occupied a station on the fair head of Louisa of Marchfeldt."

"Alas! it is but too true," said Vallenstein, sighing bitterly, and letting the heart fall to the ground.

"Ay, trample on it, sir," exclaimed the Princess; "it is metal that will not easily break."

He heeded not her remark, but sank into a reverie; at length,

"What would you have me do, Princess?" said he; "I am not fit to direct myself! All that governs man, the feelings of my heart, the faculties of my brain, are one wild chaos. Oh, Princess! had you ever felt the pang of hopeless love, you would pity me."

"What is your own idea? What does the present impulse dictate? Tell me; I will either confirm or oppose it, as it appears creditable or derogatory to your reason and dignity."

"I would rush at once down the precipice! I would know the worst!"

"I consent; the shock will awaken you from a feverish vision, and you will not break a bone in the fall. So *allons et courage!* But," said she, as they rose, "do you thus despise the token of a woman's love? Will you leave it here amongst the Mermaid's treasures? What selfish things are men! You are at this moment writhing in the tortures of rejected passion! You have no ignorance to plead in excuse of your inhumanity! This little token hints that there is one in existence who endures for you what you endure for another! But what of that! Let her suffer!"

"True," said Vallenstein, as he took it from her hand, "this one absorbing sentiment is destruction to every other. No, I will not unfeelingly fling away the gentle Beguine's token; it shall return to its station."

"How awkwardly you fasten it, Casimir! Let me aid you."

And, tying it in a knot, she once more threw it round his neck, and they left the grotto together. As they walked round the apartments examining the several groups, Vallensteïn's ear was saluted on all sides with the abhorred sound of Wolfsteïn's name. Some had seen him, and were describing his looks, or repeating some caustic bon-mot; others were wondering whereabouts he was, how disguised, &c.; and, according to appearance, he must have changed properties with Proteus, for at least half a dozen different characters were assigned him, all of which he was recorded to have personated incomparably.

"I would as lief hear the braying of an ass," said the Princess, "as this unmeaning popular buzz! It is a fine thing, nevertheless, for a mere mortal to be borne aloft on a cloud composed of the breath of fools, like some heathen deity."

As she spoke, the object of their search presented herself, but she was led by a young Greek, who seemed intent on

drawing her from the crowd, and approaching the grotto they had lately quitted. Vallensteïn paused for a moment.

"If I lose this occasion," said he to himself, "another may not occur to-night;" and, bidding adieu to his Spanish lady, he placed himself near the Baroness.

"If," whispered he, "the Baroness of Marchfeldt would vouchsafe one moment's attention to a few brief but earnest words—"

"From you, sir?" inquired she gravely. "I will not, Count Vallensteïn, dissemble my knowledge of their import—my thanks are yours; but having nothing more to offer, the conference you seek would be equally embarrassing to each. My attention is at present occupied, but were it not,—"

"You would not grant *me* audience, madam?"

And he tore off his mask, unable to bear the suffocation which oppressed him.

"No, Count, for the sake of each, I would not."

Her heart smote her as she looked on him—she had again given her hand to the Greek, and was proceeding, but she lingered.

"You must acquit me, Count—I have never trifled with your feelings! Our very first interview should have been decisive—it was even then too late."

She waved her hand, and disappeared amongst the crowd.

"Too late!" echoed Casimir, "too late!"

This was the second sentence of similar import which she had that night pronounced, but with very different feelings. The Margrave of Lindau had ventured to plead his passion, and his hopes received a most unequivocal rejection, while his sorrow and mortification, however pathetically expressed, failed totally in exciting one spark of sympathy; but when the sister of Wilhelm turned from Casimir, it was far

otherwise: her last words, "it was too late," explained precisely her feelings. Since the fête at Baron Erdenheïm's; since the truth and ardour of his attachment had been proved to her beyond a doubt, and he had become in her eyes an object of serious interest and observation, she had uttered to herself those words, "It is too late!" a thousand times. The wolf had been already in the fold; she had no heart to give, or she would have given it to Casimir.

"That man," thought she, "had we met earlier, might have made me happy; but, as it is, I am doomed to find my misery in the other."

Nothing could have been more artfully timed than the speech with which Wolfsteïn accosted Casimir on their first encounter. It recalled to the mind of Louisa the deception she supposed had been practised on her brother, and had a most sinister operation on the fortune it was intended to blight. Never had she seen Vallensteïn in a light so ad-

vantageous. She beheld him surrounded by all that could inflatee the vanity or mislead the imagination, preserving the same simple, manly, gentle character, which seemed his by nature; nor did he betray by a single word or action, that it was in the power of circumstances to elate his spirits: and had his good genius delayed the arrival of Wolfsteïn one hour, that hour's issue might have been the reverse of what it was. When the Baroness waved her hand as a farewell token to Vallensteïn, she felt within her that the moment was doubly decisive, and that the words which had composed his sentence comprised hers also; still, she resolved not to submit to her fate without at least a struggle. The young Greek who led her towards the grotto had been long hovering near her, and had more than once succeeded in his evident design of exciting her attention, when some of her numerous slaves again diverted it. Once he drew nigh and whispered in her ear, " Lady, if you have

any regard for your own welfare, let me speak to you for five minutes."

The tone in which this was uttered startled her, but ere she could reply, Frederic of Lindau was at her side pouring forth a torrent of tender nonsense, and setting forth the ardour of his passion in all the adornments of poetical diction. The disturbance which the words of the stranger had created in the mind of Louisa did not tend to soften the reply which arrested the current of poor Frederic's eloquence, and all his vanity was insufficient to blind him to the fact that his pretensions had no basis. This suitor despatched, the indefatigable Greek again pressed forward.

"Are you yet at leisure, madam? Or have you any more moths to crush ere you grant me audience? It is for your own sake, not mine, that I am thus solicitous."

"Well, stranger, I will hear you,—speak on."

"Not here—the crowd closes upon

us; many eaves-droppers are amongst them. What do you fear? I will but lead you to the mermaid's grot.—Take courage, lady."

Towards the grotto they were proceeding, when Vallensteïn met them, and challenged his fate. Again the Greek expressed his impatience.

"Believe me, madam," said he, "I have words of more importance to address to you than you imagine, or you would not thus loiter."

The Baroness believed that her conductor had discovered some plot of Wolfsteïn's, and was about to reveal it to her. That arch enemy she saw, as she imagined, in his Dominican habit at some distance, as she entered the grotto, and rejoiced that she had hitherto passed unrecognised by him. As she and her unknown companion seated themselves on the rocky bench which had lately been occupied by Vallensteïn and Princess Stolberg, the Greek unmasked, and Louisa beheld Wolfsteïn at her side. He

still grasped the hand by which he led her with more force than tenderness, as if prepared for an attempt to elude him, which, however, her extreme agitation hardly left her strength to make. He perceived that she was passive through excess of terror; he therefore relaxed the rudeness of his hold, and threw into his dark eyes, as they dwelt upon her countenance, that expression of melancholy sweetness, which had captivated the first love of Louisa of Marchfeldt. He spake not, save by these silent yet eloquent interpreters, waiting till the terror he had, by his sudden appearance, inspired, should gradually subside.

"Yes, Louisa," said he, in those musical tones which had once won a ready way to her heart, "it is I! I could not meet you first in public—I dared not stand the trial. Pardon an innocent stratagem; and, if it pleases you, bid me begone, for I am Wolfstein—the monster Wolfstein!"

"Then, with all the energy of out-

raged and most indignant feelings, I do bid you begone!—Go, go, persecutor!"

"Well, lady, I will begone. Vouchsafe but to accuse me; let those lovely lips enumerate my crimes, and I will not offend by lingering near you.—Why am I thus proscribed?"

"Incredible!" exclaimed the Baroness. "Are you so seared in conscience as to solicit a recapitulation of your base impostures!"

"Hear me, Louisa!"

She rose to leave the grotto—

"Nay, be patient, lady, for you *shall* hear me! I did deceive you—I did enter your house and your heart in disguise; but my original motive was a mere boy's frolic, and had I not loved from the moment I beheld you, I should have confessed my transgression, and bidden you adieu. But fate decreed otherwise! Young Vallenstein, but for his slow military advances, might have gained a march upon me, for in will we

were equal criminals. If such a fault as this is beyond repentance, I appeal to your ladyship's hopes of mercy. Speak, Louisa!—You forgive me?"

And in an instant he was on his knees before her, covering the hand he held, and which she could not by any effort withdraw, with tears and kisses. Her situation was unspeakably embarrassing, for any instant might have filled the grotto with some of the gay groups she had just quitted.

"Nay," said he, "let the world behold my punishment and your barbarity!—I care not."

"And do you think to move me by heaping insult upon insult?—No, Wolfsteïn, you shall never force a pardon from me!"

"Forbid me then to despair!—Say you do not hate me!"

"I will say nothing till you rise—till you release my hand!"

He rose and released her.

"Have you any allegation against me, save my having counterfeited the person of Casimir Vallensteïn?"

"Yes, and ten times more insuperable ones! *That*, I will not dissemble with you, I *could* have forgiven."

"Then you will forgive the rest; for you know," said he, "there is no resisting fate!—Has nothing ever whispered to you as much?"

Overcome by the warring feelings which distracted her, she burst into tears; she felt all the keenness of this man's insults, all his insolent security; and if it be possible that love and hate can be at once excited by the same object, she, at the same moment, loved and hated Wolfsteïn. Her tears encouraged him.

"Now," said he, "afford me but a hope—a distant, a remote hope—of your relenting, and sway me as you please; I am your slave for ever!"

"No, Chevalier; I have no hopes for a libertine and an infidel!"

He drew near, as she spoke, with a look of such fierce meaning, that she trembled.

" Bravely resolved, madam!" muttered he. " A libertine and an infidel combine to make a dangerous character! Fear it!—fear it!"

And he shook her arm roughly as he spoke, wounding its delicate texture by the savage pressure, till she almost shrieked with pain and dismay.

" Now go, madam, and brush a few more moths from existence!—Wolfstein lives still!"

And he rushed from the grotto, leaving his mask on the floor, willing that no one should be ignorant either of his interview with the Lady of Marchfeldt, or of its interesting tenor; nor was his wish ungratified, for many eyes had been upon them. The Baroness did not immediately quit the grotto; terror, surprise, and indignation, for awhile enchained her faculties. That the recent scene might have had observers, she

thought with some confusion; and though, secure in conscious purity, she did not fear the comments of the misjudging throng, she grieved at having involuntarily provoked them.

CHAPTER XIII.

> "And weep'st thou o'er the wrecks of treacherous time?
> Go, counsel with thy conscience! Search thy breast!
> Look deep within, if all be pure and sound!
> Hold fast by heaven! Then, let the changing world
> Slide from beneath thy foot; and, as it lapses,
> Smile in thine own security!"

Day had already risen over the towers of Vienna, when the maskers began to disperse, and the gala of Princess Stolberg was mingled with the events which have been;—the flowers were faded, the lights extinguished, the music silent, and the merry groups vanished. But that gala had traced its memorial, on many a bosom—memorials, which a long succession of days and nights could fail to erase. The lively lady of the feast was not the one least interested in the con-

sequences of the departed hour, albeit, practised in courts from infancy, her countenance was skilful to conceal the emotions of her heart. She loved Vallensteïn almost as devotedly as he loved Louisa—loved him even to the annihilation of that pride which might have caused her to revolt from the idea of accepting the homage which another scorned. His obstinate persuasion, that her own chestnut ringlet had been cut from the brow of her rival, was a severe trial of her fortitude, which, however, was victorious, and did not permit a symptom to escape of her pained and irritated feelings. She resolved to await calmly the healing of Vallensteïn's wound, and to pick up, even from the earth, that heart which another disdainfully flung away. Of the result of his declaration, her own accurate observations did not permit her to harbour a doubt. She awaited him at some distance, trembling at the thought of wit-

nessing his despair, yet incapable of letting him depart without being enabled to judge for herself how he bore his final sentence. He was silently passing her, but, as if recollecting himself, he turned, and, fervently pressing her hand, said—

"God bless you, my sweet friend!—Good night."

The calmness of his manner alarmed her.

"Ah, Casimir!" she exclaimed:—"how is it with you?"

"Ill enough," replied he, with a pallid smile; "but fear not for me, Princess—it is but a pang, and all is over!"

He left the assembly, eager to find himself alone; but the Princess, although greatly re-assured by his words and manner, which bespoke far more of resolution than she expected to see him evince, sent Desmond after him, relating to that faithful friend the utter rejection his hopes had suffered, and conjuring him to watch over and support his

spirits. Vallensteïn, therefore, had scarcely reached his hotel, when Desmond joined him.

"My dear fellow," said the former, "give me joy for the extinction of that delusion which has so long enslaved me."

He spoke firmly; but Desmond's voice faltered as he said—

"Is it quite gone?—Then let us think no more of it!"

As Vallensteïn opened the bosom of his vest, his father's packet fell to the floor, and the lieutenant took it up.

"There is no sleeping now," said Vallensteïn, glancing at the broad light that shone through the windows; "we will have coffee, and examine these papers; and then a walk by the Danube will cool and refresh us, and give us leisure to meditate our reply."

"But the packet is marked private, my lord."

"True," said the Count, recollecting the words of him from whom he received

it; "but as Wolfsteïn knows its purport, *you* shall not be excepted."

He tore open the envelope, and, as usual, found that it contained divers cyphered papers, with various addresses, besides the one directed expressly to himself, and which ran as follows:—

"The planet under which I was born has again turned the tide of human events, and the result of all present operations, visible and invisible, is my glory! This is their end and tendency, and in this point they must perforce concentrate. The web of a great man's destiny employs the hands of unseen legions, and the things which lead apparently to its accomplishment are the work of those mysterious ministers to whom the inevitable task is allotted. I *must* be great—the sentence was, ages ago, written amongst the stars, and no human wit or force shall frustrate or evade it.—Nature has conspicuously fitted me to co-operate with, and adorn, my destiny; my dis-

position is aspiring, and the grasp of my genius vast and boundless:—these, however, might have deceived me, for many a mere foiled adventurer has entered the lists of fame endowed with every natural gift that could lend hope to enterprise. It is not thus with me— I have traced the page which lies not figure by figure; I *know* the track before me; and trust me, Casimir, whatever I do *must* be done! Those events, which will seem the mere effect of my volition, and of the actions consequent thereon, are produced by causes which no mortal impulse can resist. But I am fruitlessly endeavouring to impress your mind with this immutable truth, for, as surely as I must keep my own exalted path till it terminates upon the mountain top, so surely will your nature and destiny impel you to impede my fortune, and to deprecate those circumstances which will seemingly bring it into birth. Of all this I forewarn you, and that is all I can do. The simple exchange of the phrase

'my father's ambition,' for the significant and comprehensive word *fate*, would render all easy, and you would calmly see me arriving, step by step, at that throne whereon it is decreed I shall finally be seated. Start not, my son!—The throne, to a vulgar mind, is a prodigious idea; to mine it has long been common and familiar—a little use would render it so to yours. I have waited patiently the developement of those matters which must lead to this splendid climax; they are now rapidly, manifestly developing, though the clue will yet be some time ere it is all unwound. However, I do not think proper to approach nearer to the crisis without preparing your mind, as far as I am permitted, for that which will ensue. Secresy I do not pause to recommend, because, however it may suit your character to call me traitor, it is neither in your nature nor in your destiny to become a parricide. A grand *coup de theatre* is preparing—the brilliant career of the Swedish hero

draws nigh its catastrophe: he will soon vanish from the scene, and then—But it is enough. Only watch the train in its gradual ignition, and you will not start when the vast explosion follows. Trust your reply to no one but Desmond."

Such was the letter which Vallensteïn and Desmond perused.

"It is a forgery!" cried the former. "It is one of the diabolical contrivances of Wolfsteïn's plotting brain! Never did my father's mind conceive, or his hand inscribe, that letter. What say you, Desmond?"

"I fear, my lord, the dangerous matter you have read is, indeed, the product of the Duke's reveries. How far Wolfsteïn may have assisted in accelerating this is a question: but trust me, my lord, the germ is in your father's breast, and has long been maturing."

Again Vallensteïn read this portentous epistle.

"What does it imply, Desmond?—

What *can* it imply but treason? If loyalty, fidelity, honour, have any definite meaning, if it is treachery for the servant to circumvent the master he has sworn to serve, then the man who wrote this letter is a traitor."

"My lord, your father wrote that letter, and the matter it involves pervades and identifies the whole man.—He deals frankly with you; he explains to you that he is not now commencing his perilous career, but that he is advanced upon the road,—that he *will*, that he *must* proceed! He does not ask your advice, nor invite your sanction;—he tells you what he *is* doing, what he *will* do, leaving you to the operation of your will, or, as he would phrase it, to the developement of your destiny. If your principles require that you should protest against his designs, you are free to protest; and, in so doing, you fulfil your utmost warrant.—Oppose him you cannot,—denounce him you will not!"

Vallensteïn sate for many minutes with his hands tightly pressed upon his forehead.

"Desmond!" cried he, at length, "there does not exist at this moment a more miserable wretch than Vallensteïn! Doubly miserable, in that I cannot divest myself of a sense of guilt!—Oh! that my father had at least left me ignorant of his designs! To be conscious of them is treason—to betray them were parricide! An hour ago I was unhappy, but I was innocent. Oh Desmond! with what pride, with what devout admiration did I lift my eyes to that man! With what deep self-congratulation did I pronounce the word father!"

Again he relapsed into a fit of desponding silenee, and Desmond, who hoped that the tumult of his thoughts would gradually subside, forbore for a while to interrupt his meditations:—at length,

"My lord," said he, "your situation is critical; you stand between your so-

vereign and your father—between moral duties and natural affections:—you are not of a temper to vacillate—you have, no doubt, already made your election."

"What do you mean, Desmond?—I stand between two crimes,—must I perforce choose one? Must I betray my master, or denounce my father?"

"No, my lord, you are not driven to so cruel an alternative."

"Well, my friend, I will at least write without delay to the Duke of Friedland: he shall not remain another week in doubt as to my principles;—he shall not number his only son on the dark list of his conspirators."

"You are irrevocably decided then, my lord, neither at present to sanction his views, nor at any future period to co-operate with his measures? It is an important decision, and time *may* alter your opinions.—Think of it well, my lord."

There was something in the lieutenant's manner, and the expression of his

countenance, which compelled Vallenstein to pause and examine him with scrutinizing attention.

"What is in your heart, Desmond?—I have a right to demand it.—My father once punished you tyrannically—and you remember it now? Is it not so that I must interpret the unusual expression of your aspect?"

"Your suspicion degrades us both, my lord. Of all the foul and debasing propensities to which man's nature is liable, the one I hold in deepest execration is deliberate revenge: besides, do you believe my heart less tenacious of obligation than of wrong?—But your position excuses you, my lord. No, Count Vallenstein, I will never betray this morning's conference,—the rack should not wring it from me! I will never lift my hand or my voice against your father:—and, if you will swear to me on the cross of your sword never to adopt his cause against our lawful and anointed

sovereign, I will adhere through life to your fortunes."

Vallensteïn took his sabre from the wall where it hung, and kissing the hilt, uttered a solemn vow never to deviate or falter from the principles which had hitherto swayed him; never to be seduced into any league, which had the ruin of the House of Austria for its object; and, if it was contrary to the sacred law of nature to reveal the existence of any such plot, as forcibly as possible to protest individually against it. The next thing to be considered was Vallensteïn's answer to his father. He and his friend were still in their masquerade habits.

"Let us," said the former, "divest ourselves of these childish trappings, which suit so ill with the awful and gloomy predicament in which we stand! How hateful, at such a moment, are the remnants of past revelry! Yet," added he, "I would I had been born to wear such a coat, and that none of costlier

texture had ever wrapt my limbs! I might now have been ranging my mountain solitudes, free, innocent, and happy!"

They were quickly restored to their usual appearance, and Vallenstïen, with small deliberation, wrote the following letter:

"My Lord,—I do not expect to make the slightest impression on a mind so intrenched in its own determinations, as I conceive yours to be; what I write, therefore, is not to dispute with *you*, but to justify myself. You, my lord, believe implicitly in the irresistible government of Destiny; and, with respect to the influence it holds over our fortunes, I am not prepared to dissent from your opinion, and, in fact, it signifies nothing, so far, how we believe. I, for mine own part, hold an intimate persuasion, that every man's soul is inhabited by certain influences, the proper direction of which belongs to the conscience, and that according as the conscience or the passion sways, the man is free or enslaved. Your soul is filled by a predominant passion, which,

pardon me, my lord, has driven the legitimate sovereign from the field, and triumphed to the extinction of conscience! According to the creed set forth in your epistle, vice and virtue, good and evil, are mere nominal existences, and the good and the wise of all times have been wasting their breath in prating of chimeras. The astrologer may promise me success, or threaten me with ruin, and I cannot disprove his assertions; but if he tells me I shall become a perfidious traitor, that I shall abuse the confidence of my sovereign, that I shall renounce all the principles which connect man with the Deity, and lend him courage to face all fortunes with an equal temper, I will never believe him, because I feel that I am free to resist the utmost force of circumstances; and were I not to resist, that I should become the artificer of my own infamy. *My* ambition, my lord, is to preserve my honour unimpeachable, my faith inviolate, and my heart as pure as is consistent with the imperfect nature of

man.—My father, is it too late? Will you not pause one moment ere you leap the gulf?—What is the stake for which you are about to sacrifice all that is precious to a noble spirit? The very utmost you can obtain, is a few short years of remorseful splendour—the *very utmost*, for I will rather conceal my brows for ever within a monkish cowl, than they shall glitter beneath a diadem purchased at so foul a price. *Your* ambition excites you to desire a throne at any rate, *mine* prompts me to disdain it. Rouse up that which is really great within you, my father, and make head against this ideal destiny! You are now the guardian angel of your sovereign's rights, beloved and confided in by him, feared and reverenced by his subjects, the terror of his enemies;—and you possess, even yet, my father, if it be worth preserving, the filial veneration of your only child. Can you resolve, by one desperate act, at once to despoil yourself of all this? Alas! I do not expect to move you! But if you are

inflexible, if your destiny *must* be obeyed, or rather, if your leviathan ambition will needs swallow down every sacred consideration, let your first confidence on this fatal subject be your last:—I am not worthy of such counsels! I protest against them with every principle, and every feeling of my heart, and, were you not the author of my existence, I would denounce them!—When we dare not claim the concurrence of the virtuous, to what dark and dangerous alliances are we compelled! You confide in one who, at his first convenience, will betray you.—Wolfsteïn told me, with the exultation of a fiend, that he possessed dreadful means of destruction;—he does indeed possess them, and, believe me, my father, he will infallibly use them."

Such was Vallensteïn's reply;—he consulted with Desmond how, with the greatest safety, it might be transmitted to Prague; for there was strong reason to suppose, that should the lieutenant be the bearer, he would be seized, and sub-

jected to the ignominious punishment from which he had been formerly rescued; nevertheless he volunteered his services.

"If," said he, "our messenger, though we have no cause to suspect him, should by any means be tempted to violate his trust, your father is ruined."

"Yet I believe the fellow to be faithful," said Vallenstein; "but so, alas! the Emperor believes my father! What must we do?"

"My lord, we will trust no man: I will bear your despatches. If it be possible I will keep my head out of the Duke's clutches; if not, he must e'en have it; at least neither you nor he shall tax my cowardice with his destruction. I have twice volunteered in the forlorn hope, when the chances were ten thousand to one against me; yet here I am, and doubt not, my lord, I will return in safety."

"I would fain believe an unseen host protects and blesses such a spirit, Des-mond."

"You may believe what you please, my lord—I am sure of it. If the axe hung over my neck, I should be equally sure of it: in that belief I shall pursue my way steadfastly on earth, and in that belief shall my soul wing her flight to heaven."

As Desmond's courage was more mental than physical, it had no tincture of rashness or bravado; and the friends conferred on the means by which he might, with the least personal risk, execute his mission.

"I suspect," said the lieutenant, "that the Duke would fain hold me in his hands as a hostage for his son. Either he honours me with a peculiar portion of his confidence, or he aims at inveigling me within his power by the appearance of it; therefore it will behove me to avoid his presence. I will deposit my despatches in the hands of Winterfeldt, and escape for my life. Winterfeldt knows that I stand on slippery ground with his excellency, and will find no mystery in such a transaction, and if he should, my life for his."

It was agreed that Desmond should set out accompanied by a proper escort, and use all possible speed till he came within five leagues of Prague; where he was to disguise himself as a friar, exchange his horse for a mule, and proceed alone to the goal, while his attendants, reaching Prague by another route, should wait without the walls, and be ready to receive and remount him, his mission fulfilled. All things being in order, the lieutenant stretched himself on his bed for an hour's repose; and Vallensteïn, harassed, dejected, and forlorn, bent his way towards the banks of the river, which presented a comfortless, chilling aspect, sufficiently in unison with his own feelings. It does not, perhaps, often happen, in the course of human existence, that a virtuous heart seeks comfort in reflection, and finds it not; but Vallensteïn examined his thoughts in vain; the path before him seemed as frozen, as cheerless, as fruitless, as the scene on which his eye rested: but the ice would

dissolve, the banks would bloom again, and the linden trees, under which he walked, wave their green heads in all the pride of their vernal livery!

"Ah!" said he, "my destiny is indeed sealed! Unhappy I *must* be, disgraced I may be; but my innocence no one shall wrest from me."

An humble chapel reared its grey walls in his path, and the feeble chant of the few aged brothers, to whom its service was entrusted, was borne by the cold blast upon his ear: he accepted the invitation, and, prostrate before the altar, renewed, with added solemnity and devotion, that vow which he had lately breathed in the presence of Desmond, fervently demanding the aid of Heaven for the maintenance of his principles; for whatever reliance he placed in his own integrity, he knew, and acknowledged, that the favour of God could alone preserve it unshaken.

CHAPTER XIV.

"And Folly, as it grows in years,
The more extravagant appears."

Hudibras.

VALLENSTEÏN had felt such true comfort in his communings with Heaven, as induced him to spend a considerable time in devotion; and when he came forth from the chapel, he was surprised to find many of the actors in the revels of the preceding night collected in their Polish cloaks, some on the banks, some on the surface of the Danube, walking, skating, or skimming along in their light traineaux. Scarcely had he crossed the threshold of the holy place, when he was accosted by Count Harrach, with—

"Ah, nephew! you are an example indeed to the dissipated, thoughtless youth of the age! You need not blush,

sir: upon my word you are a most exemplary young man!"

Vallensteïn, in fact, cared not who saw whence he came; but he was provoked by his uncle's absurd and sycophantic panegyric, and would willingly have escaped the gay groups entirely; but his affectionate uncle would not part with him.

"Do you know," said he, "my illustrious and ever-beloved brother, his excellency the Duke of Friedland, mindful, as every great man should be, of the prosperity of his relatives, has presented me with a regiment in *the* handsomest manner? It is not the thing itself—it is not the distinction—it is not the emolument—but, Casimir, it is the *manner* of the thing. It went to my very soul, I assure you, Casimir."

And, assisted by the keenness of the air, his emotion evinced itself by the redness of his eyes.

"Upon my soul!" continued he, "the Duke of Friedland is a great man, a pro-

digious great man! They tell me he dispenses regiments, titles, and estates, like a sovereign prince! To Baron Holk, they say, he has given the choice of four estates, each containing upwards of fifteen populous villages. One idolizes such a man! I declare, positively, I look upon his excellency with unspeakable feelings; in short, I consider him by many degrees the very first man in Europe."

Having reached this climax, he stopt to take breath, when Professor Westermann and Lindau joined them, at once, from different quarters. The kind-hearted Professor had, the preceding night, regaled the company with an ode on the occasion of the gala, happily commemorating the former victories of the Duke of Friedland, and presaging future ones: it was an animated and brilliant composition, the joint production of his heart and head; for Westermann, like the bards of old, beheld military glory with a sparkling eye, and was ever ready to smite his lyre in its celebration: his eu-

logiums on distinguished worth or valour were, in quality as well as fashion, as opposite as possible from those of Count Harrach, with whom self-interest was ever the inspiring principle. Westermann 'walked in the light of song,' and never condescended deliberately to flatter any man; while, on the other side, no one ever knew him guilty of lending a hand to precipitate the falling. Poor Lindau looked wan and sad, but affected his usual light-heartedness.

"Ah!" cried Westermann, as he met him, "where is the snowdrop, the primrose pale? Where is the interesting Ulrica? The little malcontent! she did not assist at our triumph last night!"

"Alas!" said Lindau, his studied smile vanishing, and his cheek flushing with manly feeling, "she assists at no triumphs! The flowers you speak of are just emblems of my sweet sister; she is an early spring-flower, born never to reach the summer!"

Westermann's eyes owned the sharp-

ness of the air: they proceeded a few steps in silence, when the Margrave said,

"Count Vallensteïn, I have a favour to ask. I have led a lounging, despicable life, till I am ashamed of it; I want to join the army. A word from you to the Duke of Friedland would at once obtain me such a post under him as I should be proud to accept. I do not seek emolument; but distinction *is* an object, and I would strive to merit it. You will, no doubt, be besieged by hundreds of such applicants; but I come straight to the point—I wish to serve, and would fain serve under your father. Will you oblige me, Count?"

Vallensteïn would willingly have answered propitiously; but he was so ill prepared for the request, that he could not conceal the confusion and mortification with which he heard it, and his blush and his hesitation astonished Lindau.

"If, sir," said he, "you have any scruple in naming the wish of the Mar-

grave of Lindau to your father, let it pass."

"Yes, Margrave, one objection I have, a powerful one; I have no interest."

"None to lend me, you mean, Count," said Lindau, with an offended smile.

"Hear my explanation, and you will be satisfied. Before the Duke's retirement, I served four years as lieutenant in his own regiment; after which probation, he entrusted me with a colonelcy, and that was my sole preferment. I took humbly what was given, but never asked for aught, either for myself or others, and my patronage was confined to the nomination of the officers of my own corps: how much farther my interest might have stretched I cannot tell, because I did not make the experiment. In the present instance I have nothing, nor is it my intention to accept any thing, nor to ask a single favour, either for myself or another."

"You astonish me, Count!" said the Margrave, adding, with some quickness,

"Surely you cannot be disaffected to the service?"

"So far otherwise, that I would gladly shed my last blood for the house of Austria. If I serve, it will probably be as a volunteer."

The two young men had walked apart from the lively throng during this conference, and the mutual frankness which equally marked the request and the rejection left them pleased with each other. As for the young Margrave, the peculiarity of Vallensteïn's situation caught his fancy, and, though he could not understand it, rendered him more than ever an object of interest and admiration in his eyes. Had Count Harrach overheard the conference, its effect on his affections would have been very opposite, and it would probably have swept away the crowd which now pressed close on the footsteps of the great man's son.

As Lindau and Vallensteïn stood, arm in arm, looking on the skaiters, Count Har-

rach came bustling up with a sprightly, handsome youth, on whom leaned a lady, whose wrinkles proclaimed her to have long, long, passed the æra of juvenile folly; she was, in short, approaching the period of which it is said, that all beyond 'is labour and sorrow:' the lilies and roses, however, bloomed redundantly on the furrowed cheek, and the oracle had not ceased within the antiquated temple. Count Harrach hastened to present Baron Rosebec to his nephew, and was about to perform the like ceremony for the Baroness, when the fortunate spouse cried out,

"No, no, Harrach! Do you think I shall suffer my fair bride to flirt and coquette with all the handsome fellows?"

"Oh!' exclaimed the Baroness, on seeing Vallensteïn, "you delightful creature! Oh! I have been so mortified! Nay, I would ten times rather never have found the centre diamond of my necklace, which you remember my losing

at the favorita, Count Harrach, than have missed such an interesting, edifying sight."

"What," asked the Margrave, "what have you missed, madam?"

"Oh, that *dear* creature! I love him ten times more for his piety than for his heroism! Oh! had any one told me in time, I would have risen on purpose! I would not have missed being in the chapel! Besides, I could have taken the opportunity of saying my prayers at the same time. There is not a more beautiful sight than the piety of a brave youth. But how many pater nosters did you say in the hour, sir? For really people delight in telling one such improbable histories, and I would not give a fig for a story if it is not correct."

Till this direct application Vallensteïn could hardly convince himself that he was the theme of this rhapsody, and was inexpressibly vexed when the fact became manifest.

" Really, madam," said he, in a tone of unrepressed petulance, " I do not understand you. I said my prayers this morning in the chapel, and most people, I suppose, say them somewhere; but I must decline entering into any detail on the subject."

" It seems," said the animated Baroness, no way chilled by the repulse, " you come in nothing short of all that I have read or imagined of true heroism. Modesty, modesty, my dear sir, is a pearl of high price, and always adorns the helm of a genuine hero. Pray, sir, if it be not impertinent, how many rebel Bohemians did you slay with your own hand at the battle of Halle? I did hear all about it, but one thing or other has put it out of my giddy head; and *now* that all the world is talking of you, I should like to know exactly how the matter stood."

" My Hebe," said Rosebec, " do give the youthful warrior time to breathe!

And have the discretion to spare a little the modesty you so judiciously commend."

"You saucy boy!" cried the blooming Baroness, "I will have *you* go to the wars, and bring me home laurels, I will! I love a valiant man, and it is so interesting to tend and watch over one's wounded warrior! There's Baroness Blumenberg, such a rout as has been made about her assiduities! And after all, if I had the same opportunity—"

"Thank you, my dear," said the Baron, laughing; "there is something so tempting in the idea of your tender *quiet* care, that I will get within wind of a cannon ball at my earliest convenience."

"Now, Count Vallensteïn," said she, laying her hand on his arm, "this is the very point on which I want a little private conversation with *you*—you may stay, Lindau. Why, you must own Count, there are few handsomer youths in the army than my Rosebec, and if once you could see him in the

Hungarian uniform, you would be charmed. *I* think he would be an ornament to the service—not that I would have him killed for all the world; should such a calamity happen, I could not hope to survive him;" (applying her handkerchief to her eyes) "though there is no saying what one can go through till one tries; but I suppose, Count, few young men come off without a wound or two? Pray, Count, how often have you been wounded?"

"As discretion, madam, is in my opinion an excellent ally of valour, and especially as my fate has denied me the healing hand of a gentle spouse, I have taken all possible precautions to avoid injury, and been, on the whole, successful!"

"Well, really," said Madame de Rosebec, "however I may admire modesty, I could wish you would be a little more communicative."

"I suspect," said Westermann, who had been silently amusing himself with

the conversation, " Count Vallensteïn has found the artillery of a pair of bright eyes more formidable than Mansfeldt's cannon."

" In love too; delightful!" screamed the Baroness: " He is perfect! Absolutely perfect! Count, of course, you have a divine traineau. I shall never forgive you if you don't invite me to a drive in it—and pray do recollect to name Rosebec to the duke."

Vallensteïn and Lindau were making their bows and departing, when the volatile Rosebec flew towards them.

" Nay, you can't go," he cried; " I have some excellent fun for you."

And little as either was in the mood for fun, they turned passively.

" My Hebe, my Hebe!" exclaimed he, " what do you think I have done? I have laid twenty dollars with Holben that if you skait you won't break your neck."

Many of the fair and noble ladies of Vienna were gliding gracefully along the frozen waters; but that Madame de

Rosebec should venture such an exhibition seemed incredible.

"You know Rosebec, dear, I have not brought my skaits: but, what on earth can induce that audacious fop to lay such a wager?"

"Oh, his confounded assurance. And I would not permit such an aspersion to rest on you, my life, if there are a pair of skaits to be had in Germany."

The poor Baroness, who in fact did not much relish the exertion her vanity demanded from her, looked ruefully towards the ice.

"My dear," she said, "I love you for your zeal; but besides that I have not my skaits, you know how I complained of that great clumsy clod of a man, the Rhingrave Glotzen, contriving to tread on my foot last night as he turned me in the waltz, till I thought I should have expired in agony."

"Well," muttered Rosebec, sullenly. "I see Holben is nearer the mark than I thought. What signifies my taking

your part, laying wagers on your head, and defying men to mortal combat for your sake, if you leave me thus shabbily in the lurch? Well, *as* you please! Holben may sneer for me in future! As for the twenty dollars, I don't mind the forfeit."

Rosebec's bride did not admire her bridegroom's aspect, nor could she bear to quit the field with the sarcasms of the detested Holben unrefuted.

"Well," said she, hesitatingly, "if I had a pair of skaits I would not scruple, since my Adolphus wishes it."

Till this sweet consent appeased him, he was gnawing the head of his cane, and looking as sulky as a bear.

"Oh, you *will* skait then," cried he, brightening; and he beckoned to a young lady who was skimming lightly by, who immediately made towards the bank, and at Rosebec's request surrendered her skaits, laughing immoderately while they were unfastened.

"I am sure, my Hebe," said the Baron, "you are infinitely obliged to Erminia."

In the mean time, Lindau approached close to the Lady Erminia, and whispered, "Pray, do not lend your skaits; it is downright barbarous!"

"Nonsense!" replied the young lady, "how long have you turned saint! I am sure, if Rosebec's Hebe breaks her neck, it will be a mercy instead of barbarity! She has the conscience to outlast all the other old women in the world; and there is no chance of her dying a natural death, so Rosebec is right to give her every opportunity."

The fastening of the skaits was achieved, and the Hebe launched upon the Danube with a shout from the thoughtless unprincipled Rosebec. Vallenstein and Lindau rushed to the edge of the bank, anticipating falls and bruises at the least for poor Hebe, whose husband cried aloud,

"Gentlemen, I bar that! Let her

alone! If you touch her the wager is void!"

"It is so *very* ridiculous," drawled Erminia, "and so officious to be interfering and spoiling a little harmless fun, and so unlike young men."

"Forgive me, lady Erminia," retorted Lindau, whose good heart revolted from such sport, "if I venture to hint, that it is very unlike the usual gentleness of a woman to find amusement in risking so wantonly the safety of another."

"I wish you had just such a Hebe of your own, Lindau, with all my heart," said the young lady, spitefully.

"Should such a treasure ever belong to me, she shall find herself under the protection of a man of honour and humanity."

"What do you mean by that, sir?" asked Rosebec in a ferocious tone.

"My words are simple and explicit, sir! Consider them, and you will presently discover the interpretation."

" I care not what they mean, provided they do not mean to insult me."

" I see nothing else they *can* mean," said the little incendiary: " I wish he was obliged to ride double all through Germany, with your Hebe behind him, as Zerbino was compelled to do by the old hag in the Orlando Furioso. Dear, what excellent fun it would be!"

Vallensteïn, meanwhile, had closely and assiduously followed the precarious progress of the hapless Hebe,—a good office, which no one else had the courage to undertake, until the hero of the hour had set the example, and then many of the fashionable youth began to think they might, without shame, assist in the succour of an old woman. Just as she was on the brink of a most dangerous fall, Vallensteïn caught her; she had, however, wrenched her ancle severely, and was almost fainting with pain and terror. Her deliverer supported her to the bank, and Rosebec, already chafed by his angry

parley with Lindau, ran furiously to the spot where Vallensteïn, aided by other young men, unfastened the skaits, and were preparing to lift her into a traineau, whose owner, having witnessed the accident, offered it for her accommodation.

"I should have thought, sir," said he, "your knowledge of the world would have preserved you from such unwarrantable interference."

"I hold all etiquette, sir, in high respect, but common humanity in still higher."

"Well, sir, you are prepared, no doubt, to purchase your exhibition of it for twenty dollars. It is a wager, sir; and since you did not let her fall fair, of course you pay the forfeit. I would not, for twice the sum, that Holben should suspect I had any hand in so unhandsome a transaction."

"I will send you twenty dollars from my hotel the instant I return, which will completely exonerate you, sir."

Something like a murmur now arose

amongst the gay throng, and Rosebec, who was appeased by this prompt acquiescence respecting the money, began in a milder tone to justify himself.

"Is it not correct, gentlemen? Is it not an established rule, that whoever breaks the course of a wager becomes liable to the forfeiture?"

"Why," said Count Harrach, "I *am* afraid you have justice on your side. A better intentioned young man than my nephew does not breathe, but he is more accustomed to camps than courts: he was not aware, I am convinced he was not, of the strict rules of a wager, or he would have been the last man on earth to violate them. Indeed I should have been foremost myself to assist my respected friend the Baroness, but I was aware it was *impossible*. Baron, considering my nephew's inexperience, what say you to a compromise? Suppose you divide the sum, and shake hands upon the matter."

"I must decline your interference, sir," said Vallenstein, sternly: "I am en-

gaged for twenty dollars. But for Heaven's sake assist in lifting this lady into the traineau! She is suffering dreadfully, while we are neglecting her. Baron, I conclude you will take charge of Baroness Rosebec."

Seeing pretty plainly, in spite of Count Harrach's *candid* decision, that the majority did not look very approvingly on him, while the part Vallensteïn had taken in the business was the theme of loud and universal applause,—the Baron thought proper to take the reins and steer his poor Hebe home.

As the margrave and Vallensteïn walked away,

"That man," said the former, "is celebrated for his good nature. He is the best natured fellow in Vienna; and so incontestably is the fact established, that to-morrow, speak of Rosebec before any one of the crowd who witnessed this morning's transaction, and you will have it enforced upon you."

When Vallensteïn reached his hotel,

he thought on poor Desmond, and the perils he might be doomed to encounter ere they met again; and almost repented that he had yielded to his generous proposal of bearing his despatches to the duke. Every day's experience had helped to attach him more truly to the lieutenant. He had not the gentle endearing character of the drooping Wilhelm, which had so forcibly won the way to his heart; on the contrary, there was a stern unbending decision about Desmond, which, at first sight, had somewhat repulsive in it; but it was certain that for the man whom he professed to love, or bound himself to serve, every fatigue was light, every danger contemptible, every thing but honour to be sacrificed. There was nothing either of tenderness or exaltation in his expressions, but, phlegmatic in manner, and brief in speech, he would perform actions which would leave enthusiasm gazing after him in astonishment. Vallensteïn had found all this, and accorded him the

liveliest sentiments of admiration, friendship, and confidence; but he could not say of him as of Wilhelm, "Thou wert very pleasant to me, my brother."

Vallensteïn found a little perfumed, ornamented billet from Princess Stolberg, entreating a line to say how it was with him, and concluding, "If you have not forsworn the sex, come to me this evening;—we will not be entirely *tête-à-tête*, so do not be alarmed. The Empress has signified her intention of spending an hour with me: we shall have Lindau, your uncle, the Erdenheïms, and I know not who;—but do not you disappoint me."

He answered,—"I am not worth entreating, my sweet friend; therefore your entreaty shall not be lost." He would fain have been left in solitude; "But it is," said he, "of little importance what I do with my time; more fruitlessly I cannot consume it than in thinking. Would I were in heaven!"

As he uttered the ejaculation the door opened, and Wolfsteïn stood before him.

"You are surprised, Vallensteïn," said he, "and well you may, for I do not often exhibit such symptoms of placability. I come to dine with you, and let us dine alone."

Vallensteïn quietly took his resolution; he believed it might be useful to converse calmly with this man, and that he might ascertain at least how far his father had confided in him.

"Well, Chevalier," said he, "a cordial welcome you do not expect from me, but I will not deny the rights of hospitality to any claimant—not even to you." And calling his page,—"Let the table be served in the library," said he: "we dine in private."

"Yes," said Wolfsteïn, "I took shelter amongst your household gods, in full confidence of their protection. Entire knowledge of the man I have to deal with is always a powerful engine. I knew we

should dine together, because I could calculate to a point on your reception of me. No man in Europe beats me at chess, nor am I less successful in any game I undertake; there is, however, one disadvantage which may at length perplex my calculations. I have too many men to move—too many kings, queens, bishops, &c. *N'importe! La fin couronne les œuvres!*"

This was rather muttered than spoken, and was a sort of thinking aloud that in Wolfsteïn was habitual, and that, in spite of the foul secrets of which his bosom was the repository, his contempt for his fellow creatures forbade him to guard against: they were listened to usually as the dark and mystic sayings of an oracle, and assisted in impressing the common mind with the idea of his genius and singularity. Wolfsteïn occupied himself with his meal like a man whose appetite was the result of health, both mental and bodily; he spoke from

time to time of politics, of individuals, of books, with the indifference of one who looks impartially on passing events, as on the leaves or branches floating down a stream, or the swallows that skim its surface.

"But you do not eat, Vallenstein," said he. "Why not eat? I delight in consuming my portion of the fruits of the earth, and thereby assisting in the operation of the great principle of destruction.—But do you know I am studying a new language?"

"That, Chevalier, surprises me, since you are already rich in the tongues of many nations."

"Yes; I carry a few master keys about me: but the language I am adopting is common to all countries, and its vulgar use has caused me hitherto to abstain from it; but my familiarity with certain holy Dominicans reconciles me to it. In short, I am on the eve of conversion—I am growing good. The

next time I dine with you, Count, I will say grace for you with the air of a confessor."

"Pardon me, Chevalier, if I doubt whether the meal will be more wholesome for your blessing."

"That will depend on your faith. Father Joseph tells me I am the man for a convert, and we are in each other's secrets. Count Harrach says, 'it is a pity that a youth of such shining talent should *rather* incline to the disbelief of certain things, which are written in certain books, and promulgated by certain men, although he is ready to pledge himself that, in the main, I do believe all that ought to be believed; but then it were to be wished I would talk of things a little more as other people do.' I begin to think it a pity too; so as I am no procrastinator, I am already half converted:" and he drew an agnus from his bosom, which he kissed with mock devotion.

"So then, Chevalier, it is not Chinese or Arabic you are about to study."

"No, it is hypocrisy!—I have the grammar perfect, and only want the accent."

Dinner ended, he drew his chair nearer to his host, and, without farther ceremony, entered abruptly on the subject which brought him thither.

"You have read your father's packet; and I may now, without surprising Casimir Vallenstein, hail him the future monarch of Bohemia. Why man, you look as if your head ached already with the weight of the regal circlet."

"Hast thou found me, oh, mine enemy?" exclaimed Vallenstein. "Often, Wolfsteïn, you have assailed me with dark and indefinite menaces, and now they are accomplished. If the letter I this morning read is no forgery—if it be not the invention of your malice—deep indeed is the destruction you have wrought!—You have perverted the

brightest intellect, and poisoned the noblest mind, in Europe!"

"Do not flatter me, Casimir: your father's ambition is one with his nature—inveterate in his blood; and the great designs which have sprung up within him are indigenous to the soil; they were born with him, have grown with him, and will only perish with him. I have no project to fulfil in deceiving you; you may, therefore, credit my assertion, that my sole implication with your father is my knowledge of his views, and my engagement to assist them, so long as I may find it my interest to do so. When he first knew that I was privy to his designs, he would have secured my silence by *other means* than an alliance; but, Casimir, I am fearful even to him.—He *dared* not!"

The words came slowly forth, and the lips of the speaker whitened as he uttered them, while Vallenstein shrunk and shuddered at the meaning they conveyed.

" Your father," continued the Chevalier, " cannot now stand on punctilio—he has chosen his road; the objects which impede him must be dispersed or crushed: a few drops, more or less, of vital blood are nothing in the way of ambition; he *ought* to have destroyed me if he could, for the alternative is very precarious—a fact to which he is not blind. But all is for the present secure; I have no object to serve in separating our interests."

" But my father's good genius will yet arrest his footsteps—he will pause upon the brink; it is not yet too late."

" Hearken, Vallensteïn! He has leaped the gulf already—he *must* go on—he never *can* recede! No, no! he is pledged beyond all power to retract! To rush forward is perilous, but to pause now were destruction."

Casimir felt all the force of his enemy's assertions, and was internally convinced of their truth.

" After all," said Wolfsteïn, as he ob

served the deep and bitter anguish his words created, " a few moments of calm and sober reflection will bring all this to its level. Think, instead of feeling, and you will be satisfied! Your father is, as he says, accomplishing his destiny: such men are created to furnish matter for the records of history, or give effect to the tragic scene. Till the world tumbles again into chaos, or dissolves into that nothing whereto all things tend, your father's name and his deeds will shine, with small exaggeration, on the pages of romance, or assist in exalting the fame of some modern Roscius. As for meaner considerations, what does it signify whether it be plague or ague, the axe of the executioner, or the dagger of the assassin, that divides between the matter and intelligence of a man? Severed they must be, it appears, sooner or later; and who but a child, or an old woman, would cavil at the means? If I do not err in my calculations, you

are at odds with his Excellency.—Is it not so?"

"Chevalier, you may calculate on my never partaking in any measures which my conscience disavows."

"Just so," said he; "I am right then. You must stand in that case in a difficult predicament. Well; it will require the more adroitness to maintain your footing. Desmond, I conclude, is departed; or have you substituted some other messenger?"

"Desmond left me this morning with my determination."

"And when does he return?—You must not be surprised by his delay, for, if I mistake not, he will have to pay old Charon his fare, or wander headless on the banks of Styx."

"Surely, surely," cried Vallensteïn, "you are not serious!—My father will not hazard such an outrage."

"Most certainly he will, if Desmond is not skilful enough to elude him. Had

I known you were so interested in the person of your ambassador, I would last night have warned you of the danger that awaits him."

"I will not lose another moment!" said Casimir, starting from his seat. "I will pursue him to Prague; and, if too late to prevent his entering it, insist on his release—nay, exchange myself for him!"

"Take counsel, Count Casimir: these are critical times! I have eaten bread and salt with you—I will not be accessary to your entrapment. If you go to your father he will imprison you, and prove your fortitude, till either your life or your spirit yields under the trial. Besides, the sacrifice will be useless; your father has strong antipathies, and Desmond is one of them;—but take heart, he shall nöt die! I have a voice in the duke's councils; and, in this instance, you shall command it, which never speaks but with effect."

"May I trust you, Wolfsteïn?"

"Yes, on one condition. You are going this evening to the Stolberg's; I am not specially invited, but I shall be there. When we meet in her apartments, you shall shake hands with me.—What! is it too bitter?—Will it not go down? Alas! poor Desmond!"

"What security will you give me, that, in return for such a sacrifice, my friend shall, indeed, be rescued and restored to me?"

"Have I ever dealt doubly with you? Search your mind; and, having weighed the matter, if the life of your friend be not worth the purchase of the condescension I require of you, the bargain is null—he dies! and your hand is pure from the abhorred contact!"

"I will pay the price you exact, though most reluctantly."

"That rests between you and your own thoughts—the act is all I ask. But why should we be foes, since we are no longer rivals? Your perseverance in pursuit of Wilhelm's sister is conquered—

is it not? Thus the great cause of contention has ceased between us. The Marchfeldt did horrible execution last night; she destroyed your substance, and *my* shadow, for she has annihilated poor Lindau! Well, *au revoir*, Vallensteïn, I shall expect you with hand ungloved."

CHAPTER XV.

"How happy some, o'er other some can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
He will not know what all but he do know.
And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
So I, admiring of his qualities."

Shakspeare.

VALLENSTEÏN found a small but brilliant circle, with the Empress at their head, at Princess Stolberg's; and, in the moment of his entrance, Count Harrach was amusing the company with a recital of the morning adventures, and celebrating the unheard-of heroism of his nephew in his usual courtly eloquence; insomuch, that they who listened to his superlative epithets might have supposed that all the exploits of the rival heroes, Achilles and Hector, with those of all their train of hostile knights, Greek and

Trojan, were a mere joke in comparison with Casimir's gallantry in rescuing Baroness Rosebec from a downfall on the ice. He had the gratification, however, to find his oratorical essay crowned with universal interest and approbation, for his magnified nephew was the favourite of the hour; and it is easy to exalt the most insignificant action into a miracle of one who has attained that shining but precarious eminence. Count Harrach paused, as his hero entered. Princess Stolberg met and led him to the Empress, who presented him her hand with a look of such affectionate and gracious approval, as touched even his chilled bosom with consoling warmth. He felt himself regarded by all with unusual interest, for in fact it was generally whispered that he had been finally repulsed by Baroness Marchfeldt, and the ladies all voluntarily accorded their pity, as the preliminary to a more positive gift; for he was the handsomest man at court, and enjoyed the reputation of being at once

the bravest and the gentlest. How this secret transpired no one could tell, but that it was widely circulated and implicitly believed was certain; and that the Baroness had not been bidden to the select assembly of this evening, was justly interpreted a compliment to the feelings of the rejected swain.

Harrach now, with an air of much importance, acquainted his nephew that his godlike brother had sent him a somewhat hasty summons; and that, from the brief manner in which his excellency notified his pleasure, he conceived that he would immediately take the field.

"To be sure," said he, "this promptness in execution is only one of a thousand prodigious attributes; but methinks I could have been well content, had it so pleased him, to pause a little while, for the equipping and accoutring of myself and equipage is not the work of a moment. I could wish that the brother of the most illustrious and conspicuous man in Europe should make a figure conve-

nient and suitable to such an alliance.—When do you set forth, Casimir?"

He was saved the trouble of reply by the entrance of the Chevalier, which attracted every one's attention: Princess Stolberg hastened to meet him, with an aspect of displeased surprise.

"You here, Wolfsteïn!" said she; "I did not expect you.—You are no negative character, and therefore, when you are not bidden, you might draw a positive inference."

"That I am not welcome, Princess?"

"I am loth to utter words so discourteous; but, in very truth, Wolfsteïn, you must not stay. I expect Professor Westermann, and even were his philosophic good nature to overlook the insult of your presence, her Imperial Majesty, who selected the party, would find herself offended in his person.—Positively, Wolfsteïn, you must amuse yourself somewhere else this evening."

"Hear me, charming Stolberg! I knew you expected the professor this evening,

and therefore I came.—Nay, hear me patiently!—I am ashamed to have offended him, and came to request your mediation. I am buying up and collecting all the copies of that most offensive and petulant libel:—I will trample it to dust, burn it to ashes, or dig a hole in the ice, and send it to the bottom of the Danube!"

"Is it possible? Are you serious, Wolfsteïn?"

"If," said he, assuming the air of a man whose feelings are wounded, "you are not resolved to close the door against my repentance, by thus repulsing its first step—if *you* do not compel me to retrograde, you shall quickly find I am serious."

"But the Empress,—your reprobate habits, and audacious avowal of them, have so revolted her, that she will never permit you to remain."

"Very well, Princess! Mark me then; my faults be on your head, and on hers! A circumstance, which I can hardly deem

accidental, has turned the tide of my opinions into a new channel:—this moment is critical! I came out of the frosty air to-night into this scene of brightness, warmth, and beauty, with a heart of flesh in my bosom,—turn me out from among you, a proscribed man, and it will petrify again, and remain a stone for ever!"

He spoke with such affecting, yet desperate energy, that even the penetrating lady of the key was moved and alarmed.

"If you are sincere, Wolfstein, I will speak to the Empress, but I must not delay, for Westermann will be here."

He snatched her hand and kissed it, and she found it wet with a tear. Had she been allowed a moment for reflection, her experience of this singular character might have inclined her to pause in her work of mediation, but his earnestness had every appearance of being genuine; and in truth the denunciation, "my faults be on your head!" was appalling enough to enforce compliance, since it was no

light burthen with which she was threatened. She approached the Empress, who saw, with very visible displeasure, that this interdicted personage had not only entered the room, but remained in it. To her he had, in a thousand ways, rendered himself obnoxious: his infidelity, licentiousness, disloyalty, his gross, unmanly abuse of some of the most respectable of her subjects, in short, his utter contempt and defiance of whatever she held dignified and sacred, made him in her eyes an object of unqualified aversion. The universal and exclusive privileges of this man had hitherto extended to the court, and the Empress had tolerated his occasional presence there as the ally of her cousin Maximilian of Bavaria, and of Father Joseph, either of whom, a short time since, it would have been impolitic to offend. Things were now changed, and the Empress was resolved to make herself amends for the painful trammels which had restrained her utterance of displeasure, so just and

natural, by forbidding the cause of it to enter her presence. She saw that Princess Stolberg approached her with a petition, and prepared herself with a stern negative. The Princess knew every shade of expression in the beautiful countenance of her august mistress, and could interpret its meaning; she therefore, instead of immediately preferring her suit, held forth her hand, on which was the sparkling drop just fallen from Wolfsteïn's eye.

"If this," said she, "is genuine, as I hope it is, your Majesty has not a pearl in your crown of half the value! It is a tear of repentance from the eye of a very notable sinner; and if your Majesty vouchsafes to accept his contrition, it may be followed by many gems of equal price."

The Empress, who, like other royal persons, lacked opportunity for the study of human nature, did not, for a moment, suspect the possibility that even Wolfsteïn dared intrude his mockeries upon

her: unaffectedly devoted to religion, the hope of gaining such a convert excited the purest delight in her mind, and, like the angels, she rejoiced over this one sinner's repentance. Princess Stolberg saw the moment was favourable, and repeated the penitent's contrite expressions respecting his late offensive publication. In short, Wolfsteïn was permitted to kneel and kiss the Imperial hand. The blue eyes of the Empress were uplifted in thankfulness for this most unexpected transition from vice to virtue, while her heart breathed a silent, yet fervent supplication, that this good work might not miss its accomplishment; and the prayer, no doubt, returned into her own bosom.

Wolfsteïn proved as perfect in the accent as in the grammar of his new language, and his *natural* and *ingenuous* humility could not be detected as counterfeit, even by the lynx eye of Princess Stolberg. The Empress undertook to plead for him with Westermann, to whom

he declared he could not uplift his eyes till the road to reconciliation was smoothed between them. In the mean time the Chevalier crossed the room, and approached Vallensteïn, who was engrossed in conversation with Lindau and the interesting Ulrica, and taking his hand, shook it hastily, saying aloud at the same time,

"We so prolonged our conference, that I feared I should have caused your arriving late."

Vallensteïn had lost no opportunity of publicly expressing his aversion for Wolfsteïn; and, besides, the rivalry which subsisted between them was strongly suspected, so that this proof of cordiality excited general surprise, and not a little assisted in strengthening the credit of the new convert.

"I am satisfied," said Princess Stolberg to the Empress, "that there is no deception; Vallensteïn has certainly witnessed some proof of genuine reformation; for fiercer animosity no man could bear to another than he to Wolf-

steïn: he could not endure to hear him named; it was an antipathy such as could only be justified against the prince of darkness, and the only blot I have ever been able to discover on the fine temper of that noble youth."

The Professor entered, and at the sight of his adversary started; his first feeling was that of resentment, his first impulse to retreat; but he recollected his duty to the Empress, and meant, having kissed her hand, to request her permission to retire. Being endowed with as much good-natured credulity as any man living, and willing to hope all things, and believe all things, he was not entreated in vain; and when the man who had so grossly outraged him stood before him, faltering out his excuses, the good Professor frankly held forth his hand, saying,

"No more, no more, my good sir! let us plant the olive! let us shut the temple of Janus!"

If Wolfsteïn had been capable of blush-

ing the name of that double-faced deity might have produced a suffusion; for never was a more impudent fraud carried on with more masterly address.

"Did I not tell you, Count," said Lindau, "that we should hear of the chevalier amongst the Trappists?"

"Ay, Frederic," said Ulrica, with an arch smile, "and those who believe his conversion are in *la trappe* already."

"Why, you little hard-hearted sceptic! are you the only one who dare refuse to be edified by this public and exemplary penance?"

"She is not the only one guilty of such scepticism in this assembly," said Casimir.

"But how, fair Ulrica, are your gentle and unpractised eyes able to look through this exquisite dissembling?"

"Because I am rather a spectatress than an actress in life's drama, and substitute thoughts and reflections for passions and feelings."

It was now judged delicate to give a

new turn to the subject which occupied the circle, and relieve the neophyte Wolfsteïn from the embarrassment he might be supposed to feel, in the consciousness of forming the exclusive theme. Princess Stolberg, therefore, who possessed unequalled adroitness in such manœuvres, observed that the little page, Theodore, having been sick the night before, and deprived of the indulgence of assisting at her masked fête, she would, with the permission of the Empress, find habits for the party, and bring the child from his chamber for an hour's amusement. No voice dissenting, the plan was no sooner proposed than acceded to, and the Princess led her guests to an apartment, where each might select the habit which suited his taste. Vallensteïn, weary, spiritless, and quite unequal to the assumption of any character, took a domino; and, as he observed Wolfsteïn equipping himself as a Spanish muleteer, he could not resist saying,

You need no mask, Sir Warbeck—your own consummate skill will deceive your very master! The devil himself would have taken you for a saint to-night!"

"Yes, I got it up very creditably, and I almost think you are right, since the black eyes of that intelligent rogue, the Stolberg, were baffled. You," said he, turning earnestly upon him, "are wise enough to anticipate the consequence of betraying the generous confidence I repose in you."

"For Desmond's life and rescue you are already pledged."

"That is true, and I will redeem the pledge: but," added he, maliciously, "I have still a more important hostage for your silence; and, be it known to you, that if the Stolberg finds me out till I choose to lift the mask, no consideration of self-interest shall withhold the thunderbolt from withering the proudest head in Europe. Nay, Vallensteïn, I do not

wish to menace or insult you; I would use my power temperately; it suffices that I *can* put my foot on the neck of mine enemy when it suits me to do so. I only warn you in friendship what a breath of yours *may do*, what a mighty destiny is suspended on it."

Vallensteïn felt the ice-bolt in his heart; he heard, and was compelled to hear, in silence, this cool, envenomed, deliberate insult; to endure, without retort, a threat, which he knew the man who threatened was but too well provided with the means to execute. Nor was it any alleviation to his suffering, that the being he so reasonably detested had constrained him to submit to the semblance of social intercourse; even while uttering his fiend-like denunciations in his ear, he had laid his hand upon his arm, and to the rest of the assembly the whisper bore the colour of amicable communication. The motley group being attired in their various disguises, now

returned to pay their renewed homage to the Empress in their assumed characters.

"But where is my little page," said she, "to whom the gala is given?"

As she spoke, a Cupid with a pair of snow-white wings, a bow and well stocked quiver, ran towards her, knelt, and pressed his rosy lips to her hand; and by his side stood, as Casimir believed, that self-same nun of the order of Mercy, who had smoothed his pillow and hymned him to rest in his sickness.

"May it please your Majesty," said the nun, in the well-known voice of Princess Stolberg, "I would fain seduce this dangerous urchin into my service; if he will but lend me *one* arrow, he shall have kisses and comfits to last him for life."

"But where then is Baroness Marchfeldt?" asked the perverse little rogue: "I should like, methinks, to have half my wages from her."

The child could not well have made a more galling speech, had all Machiavel's subtlety been exchanged for all his art-

lessness; the presence of mind for which the Princess was remarkable, was necessary, besides her mask, to conceal her agitation.

"You preserve your character admirably, Cupid," she said: "I always understood you were a froward, ungrateful boy, and now I know you I perceive you were not libelled."

Vallenstein was breathless: in the kind nun who had watched his restless pillow, and soothed his feverish hours, he recognized one whom he never suspected, and whom his heart told him he never could reward with the prize for which those vigils were held, and those cares endured. As a friend and a sister, he loved Princess Stolberg; but there his affection stayed, and farther he knew it never would proceed: she was the last woman on earth whose love he would have desired, because she was the last woman on earth whom he could bear to reject.

"Yes," said he, making an effort to throw off his own embarrassment, and to do that which he believed to be just and

honourable, "Cupid *is* a froward ungrateful boy; one whose business it is to confound opposites, to deceive, to disappoint, to misguide: I have forsworn him, holy sister—my heart is dedicated to a milder deity; consecrate yours with it at the pure shrine of friendship; and, for this fickle, malicious urchin, let us leave him."

When Princess Stolberg resumed the habit in which she had nursed Vallenstein, all the anxiety, all the tenderness, all the hope, and all the despair in which she had hung over his couch of suffering, seemed to return upon her; she felt that the Rubicon was passed, that she had tacitly, but unequivocally, declared her passion; and she felt likewise that it was gently and kindly, but firmly, repulsed.

"I have," thought she, "ruined myself! My indelicate precipitation has for ever destroyed my hopes! I might gradually and imperceptibly have won him to love me; but now he will not even

esteem me—he will not trust me! How should he trust one who has been so untrue to herself?"

The manly delicacy of Vallensteïn suffered for the woman to whom he gave every sentiment of approval, gratitude, and kindness, withholding only love. He felt himself pursued by a persecuting destiny, against which all the resistance of his will was impotent; and world-sick, and weary, his thoughts fled for rest to the spot where they always took shelter when he found himself tried beyond endurance—the grave of Wilhelm. He remembered how Wilhelm had longed to cast anchor in that peaceful harbour, and now he too well understood that longing. In the tumult of feelings that warred within the bosom of Princess Stolberg, she still preserved the tact which so remarkably belonged to her. The countenance of Vallensteïn was concealed; but his silence, his deep, yet involuntary, sigh, the dejection expressed in his posture, as he leaned with folded arms against

a cabinet, all told her, without words, that whatever the weight of his own sorrows might be, hers had made a cruel addition to them.

"If," thought she, "there breathes a man to whom a woman might safely confide the secret of her weakness, there he stands! I have gone too far to pause or to recede—I will go farther! Vallensteïn," and she laid her hand upon his arm, "let us take counsel together."

He started, and followed her to a less crowded part of the room, and obeying her silent invitation, sate down beside her.

"Vallensteïn," said she, at length, "you are suffering for your friend—your delicacy, your generosity, your compassion, are all suffering—your manly cheek blushes beneath your mask in shame for my weakness—is it not so, Vallensteïn?"

"No, Princess! if my cheek burns, if my heart aches, it is for my own perverse and wayward affections. Augusta, to no woman living am I bound as I am

bound to you; and, oh! let not the error of my capricious inclination break the chain which connects us! Let a sacred and inviolable friendship unite us for ever!

"It seems, Vallensteïn, we are like two children crying for the moon, each pines for that which is unattainable: but let us examine your compromise—a sacred, inviolable and eternal friendship—the union of our souls here and hereafter. Casimir, why quarrel about a name?"

"If it were *but* a name, we would not contend for it; but alas, Augusta! friendship and love are distinct ideas. I know it well; *for* both at this moment agitate my heart. Friendship may be experienced with repetition, may be divided; but love must not be shared nor multiplied; it occupies, it *must* occupy, its own separate shrine. Augusta, my friend, we are both unhappy—but Heaven keep you from my destiny!"

"Ah!" said she, despondingly, "had I asked a boon from Heaven, it would have

been to share it. Casimir, I have seen you pale, languishing, helpless, senseless, that bright intelligence extinct, that active, manly form supine and motionless, your mind imbecile, your beauty faded; yet, even then, inert, unconscious as you were, amongst all the various multitude of forms and intellects which people the universe, I would have chosen for mine own, the outstretched, feeble, scarcely animate existence of Casimir Vallensteïn."

She was strongly agitated, and her tears fell fast from beneath her mask upon her bosom.

"Would I had died then!" said Casimir bitterly, unused to contend with the tears of a woman: "Augusta, decide for us! What I am you know—what proportion of my heart I can offer, you can calculate; if such a gift be worth your acceptance, it is yours; but remember, I do not deceive you: at this momoment I love Louisa of Marchfeldt to

distraction! If such a heartless being has value in your eyes, take me, Augusta, and confide implicitly in my honour—however my thoughts may wander, never again shall my tongue pronounce that name in your hearing. Do with me as you will, but do not weep!"

"Do not be frightened at my tears—I have shed many a tear for your sake, though they have fallen in secret. When do you quit Vienna, Casimir? Here you cannot stay! Without this mask I will never look upon you. My countenance shall never endure the wounding scrutiny of your eyes. When will you go? Will you go to-morrow?"

"Let me think, Augusta—let me think for a moment:—I *must* await the return of Desmond from Prague; but a few days will bring him, and then I will not linger an hour."

"Yes, you will go where death is busy, and you will seek him and court him, Casimir, for you are very unhappy;

I, too, I, who cannot make you happy, have added to your wretchedness:—Oh, Casimir!"

"It is well, said he gloomily, "to have drank out the dregs of one's chalice.—But, no; let me not delude myself—the bitterest drop is yet unswallowed!"

"Vallensteïn, my friend, take courage: you will join your father—his glory will be yours! The inspiring, energetic, absorbing struggle—the pomp, the pride, the echoing shout of victory—all this awaits you—all this will soon drown within your bosom the feelings which are now rending it."

"You are deceived—no such triumphs await me! My hopes of glory, like my other dreams, are faded already."

"This is mere despondency, Vallensteïn. You will arouse from it with double vigour. Where do you join the Duke?"

"No where, madam!"

"Nay, shake off this dejection, and let me hear you speak once more as you

are wont to speak.—Whither do you go from hence?"

"I know not—I have no where to go!"

"Surely, Casimir, you know not what you say!"

"I tell you, Princess, when I go hence I have no object, no business, no abiding spot on the globe!—I would fain go where the sayings of men may not follow me; for they will soon say what it will madden me to hear."

"Casimir, you *must* go to your father—your duty, your reputation, demand it! What!—shall a woman's frown shrink and wither up your spirits? And shall one cold breath extinguish the spark within you? You were born for better things! Nay, I could have hoped more nobleness in your very despair. I would rather see you a bleeding corse, than hear you the theme of one degrading imputation!"

"Right, Princess," said Wolfsteïn, who had long stood near them unob-

served. "Your advice is infallible! Vallensteïn was never made to lie weeping under a willow! he should go to his father." And he passed.

"Fiend!" exclaimed Vallensteïn; "he knows I cannot go to my father."

"You cannot!—Sure you have not offended him?"

"No, madam, *he* has offended *me!*"

"Pardon me, Vallensteïn, your resentment cannot be other than misplaced. Lay it, let a friend conjure you, at the feet of your illustrious parent! Such a sentiment, wrong at any time, would now be construed not only to your blame but to your disgrace!"

"Forbear, Augusta! If you could turn over and examine the thoughts of my bosom, you would marvel at the store of misery one mind can hold. Unmerited disgrace is, perhaps, at hand, to swell the account. I believe I can bear that too! With you, at least, methinks I would stand fair; but even that is de-

nied, for the word of justification I dare not utter!"

At that moment Wolfsteïn once more approached, and said, in a solemn tone, "Remember!—Remember!" And again he passed, while Vallensteïn ground his teeth and smote his forehead, as though he suffered to the extent of his endurance.

"For Heaven's sake," said the Princess, "what does Wolfsteïn mean? It should seem he possesses some mysterious power over you, or some knowledge of which you dread his revelation—but I will not think it. Oh, Vallensteïn! forget what has past—look on me once more as your friend, your consoler—share your sorrows with me—I *may* find the means to lessen them!"

"I must not, Princess—I must bear them all alone!"

"Yet Wolfsteïn knows them?"

"Yes; Wolfsteïn knows them; and that he does so is the deadliest drop in

my bitter draught—but see, he comes again: let us not name him."

And he started from his seat ere this hated and dreaded intruder reached him; and, finding little Theodore in his way, lifted him from the ground, and began to play with him boisterously, so boisterously that the child, half crying, entreated to be released.

"See," said he, "you have broken one of my wings! You are a great rough soldier, Count; I like the ladies to play with me."

"I envy the Count his fine animal spirits," said the malignant Wolfsteïn.

He had taken the place, for two minutes, which Vallensteïn had occupied by the side of Princess Stolberg, for the purpose of ascertaining whether her belief in his conversion was shaken. He did not mistrust the strength of the chain by which he fettered Vallensteïn; but as he held the penetration of the Princess in high account, he thought *her* well worth

securing also. The tone of her voice satisfied him at once of her scepticism.

"Princess," he whispered, "I perceive you feel some confusion in my presence; but be assured that what my ear inadvertently received, my tongue shall never utter. Our affections are independent of us; and that you should have been impelled to offer yours where they have not been received, is a misfortune which no one, save yourself, can ever induce me to betray."

And he left her to digest this implied threat.

CHAPTER XVI.

"This is the state of man! To-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hope; to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him;
The third day comes a frost!"

Shakspeare.

Some days after the select fête at Princess Stolberg's, Desmond arrived: he had entered Prague in the disguise of a monk, and made his way to the presence of his friend Winterfeldt, who could, with difficulty, comprehend the necessity for such clandestine measures, especially as he had no suspicion of the contents of the despatches which were deposited in his hands, but which, nevertheless, he promised should not reach the Duke till a day should have elapsed after the lieutenant was again clear of Prague. In short, all was securely executed, and, in respect to the existence of danger, no

proof whatever had occurred. Desmond was half mad when he learned the compromise that had been made with Wolfsteïn for his deliverance. Vallensteïn, immediately on the return of his ambassador, sent him to the palace, to solicit a private audience of leave—a painful and most embarrassing ceremony, which might not be dispensed with; and it was most readily and graciously accorded. He had, for some days, absented himself from court, but his non-appearance was attributed to the necessity of preparation for the campaign on which he was about to enter, while, in fact, he was employed in incessant exercise—riding or walking without intermission, in hopes, by intense bodily fatigue, to dull or silence the internal wretchedness. He foresaw the innumerable perplexing questions which awaited him from his sovereigns; and, after much vain deliberation, resolved to trust the impulse of the moment for his replies, determined on two points only—neither to betray his father,

nor to utter an untruth. The august pair received him with the usual marks of interest and regard.

"We have been consulting," said the Emperor, "what token of our love might be most acceptable to a man, on whom it is scarcely in our power to bestow a larger portion of wealth, or honour, than he already possesses or inherits; your affections, therefore, are your only assailable part, and there we direct our bribe:" presenting, as he spoke, a case containing the joint miniatures of himself and his imperial spouse, encircled with costly jewels.

"No," said he, struck with the perceptible and strong emotion with which this royal gift was received, "I will have no verbal thanks. You will soon hold an ostensible charge against our enemies. No doubt your father reserves you a worthy and distinguished post, such as your merit, independent of your blood, may aspire to."

Vallenstein lowered his eyes, and was silent.

"Do you know, Count," proceeded the Emperor, "it will often, in all probability, be in your power to confer favours on your sovereign? The Duke of Friedland has stipulated,"—and something of a resentful glow passed over his cheek—"as the price of his services, for the undivided rule and guidance of his vast army. He has not left to our option the nomination of a general. I have not interest with him for the command of a single regiment! If I would serve a friend, therefore, I will do it through your medium: those I would promote shall be your clients, for your interest must be as sure a way to preferment as that of your father. What his jealousy would refuse to the interference of his sovereign, his tenderness will accord to the solicitations of his son."

Still he was silent, and the Empress beheld, with wonder and sympathy, his

increasing and overwhelming agitation; partly she attributed it to the sensibility and modesty of his nature, and partly to the mournful feeling with which he was bidding adieu to a scene where she knew he had experienced the severest disappointment which a young and unpractised heart can suffer.

"I could wish, my gallant friend," she said, "to see you go forth to the conflict with a brighter aspect, but you will return to us covered with exultation and glory."

"What think you," said the Emperor, "of the Chevalier Wolfsteïn's sudden conversion? The Empress is sanguine, but I am very incredulous."

"I fear, my liege, he will never deserve to be canonized."

"And yet," observed the Empress, "you sanctioned the general hope by exhibiting towards him tokens of such cordiality as you had not been supposed to entertain."

"Your Imperial Majesty must deign

to remember that I am of late become a politician; it is one of the signs of my profession to give the hand without asking counsel of the heart."

"Do you then," asked the Empress, with a disappointed air, "suspect my neophyte of hypocrisy?"

"Pardon me, madam, I am a prejudiced man. It is well known I never loved Wolfsteïn."

"Your antipathy is not an inheritance," said Ferdinand, "for he is deep in the duke's counsels."

"He is, my liege, and it was in consequence of his connexion with my father that I relaxed into that apparent cordiality which struck her Majesty at Princess Stolberg's."

"And when set you forth, Vallensteïn?"

"With your gracious permission, tomorrow."

"May guardian angels be your companions," said the Empress, "and hold their invisible shields over you in those

conflicts which so soon await you! Go forth, my beloved knight, to the battle, and conquer."

The Emperor rose, and opening his bureau took thence a small packet: "Here, Count Casimir," said he, "are papers which must be transferred directly from your hand to that of your illustrious father. You will oblige me by keeping them about your person; their contents are of a delicate nature."

Poor Casimir now touched the acme of his embarrassment. He well knew that before he quitted that august presence some explanation was inevitable, but in vain he endeavoured to rally his spirits for this severe trial—they utterly forsook him—his colour went and came; he opened his lips repeatedly, but spoke not, and leaned against the back of the chair on which the Empress was seated in order to conceal the unsteadiness of his frame. The Emperor remained standing, his hand extended with the papers, beholding in silent astonishment the

agitation which so visibly affected the young soldier.

"Are you ill, Count?" said he, "or what am I to infer from this unconquerable emotion?"

"Alas! I am not going to my father."

"Not going to your father! And whither then are you bent, young man?"

"My liege, I scarcely know—whither chance leads me."

He threw himself at the feet of the Empress, who had risen in surprise, and attempted to kiss her hand, but she withheld it.

"Rise, Count," said she, coldly: "an explanation of this strange scene is necessary—we await it from you."

Casimir arose, and with the deadly calm of desperation, said, "May it please your Majesties, I am not going to my father—I *cannot* go to him! And whither I go, signifies not to myself nor to any human being, for a more forlorn wretch wanders not through the world's wilderness."

Touched by his despair, the Empress resumed the native benignity of her accent. "You have no doubt had the misfortune to offend your illustrious parent; but, if *you* have erred past pardon, I will never trust appearances again."

"Confide your distress with me, young man," said Ferdinand, soothingly, taking his hand; "I will mediate between you and your father. You shall remain at Vienna till the paternal arms are open to receive you."

"Alas, it must not be," said Vallensteïn: "your gracious intercession will avail me nothing. The Duke of Friedland has no more a son—I have no more a father."

Nothing could exceed the surprise and consternation of the imperial pair, or their disappointment in beholding their young favourite indulging an implacable animosity towards his father, or else, tacitly admitting that he had offended past forgiveness.

"Am I then to understand, young man, that you reject my mediation? Am

I to think that you refuse to be reconciled with the author of your being?"

Casimir remained immersed in a sorrowful stupor. He replied not, for he had nothing to reply; and Ferdinand, who regarded this silence as a proof of sullen contumacy, said,

"Since, sir, you can outrage thus rudely the most sacred bond of nature, I marvel not that the voice of your sovereign should sound idly in your ears.—But," and he waved him towards the door, "it is time our conference should cease!—I commend you to your better thoughts, sir."

Casimir moved mechanically towards the door.—The Empress was skilled in the gentle office of mediatrix between a froward son and an offended father, her own first-born having inured her to it. She thought on him, and felt a mother's yearnings towards the present culprit:—she cast a supplicating glance at Ferdinand, and reading no discouragement in his benign countenance,

"Nay, Vallensteïn," she said, "go not forth with your sovereign's displeasure on your head: think towards whom your contrition is required. If you are too proud to ask forgiveness of your earthly father, you will soon forget to bend the knee to your Heavenly one.—I am not used to court compliance; you will be sorry for the stubbornness which has bent me to it. Speak—speak, Vallensteïn!"

The earnest, affectionate sweetness which mingled itself with the dignity of this majestic princess, acted powerfully on the feelings of Vallensteïn; his heart opened to it, and a copious flood of tears fell from his eyes, as seizing her hand, he kissed it fervently, and exclaiming,

"May the Ruler of heaven and earth bless you, and keep firm the foundation of your throne!" he rushed from the royal presence and from the palace, leaving Ferdinand and his consort in sorrowful consternation.

"Well!" said he, as he entered his hotel, "it is now all over!—I have di-

vested myself of all hopes, interests, and occupations—my heart should be light now. Desmond, my friend, open that desk,—there is much money in it. Pay-off my whole suite:—reserve not one of them! We will forage for ourselves, a brace of sturdy adventurers! My Mirza and your Ajax shall carry us forth, masters of ourselves and them.—Hurry, hurry, good Desmond! It must be a stirring night with us!"

Desmond complied in silence, with an aching heart, but an unchanged countenance; while Vallensteïn, humming a little wild and mournful ballad, which had been a favourite with Wilhelm, rapidly paced the apartment, and at length seizing a pen, wrote with a shaking hand as follows:

"Sweet friend, adieu! I go forth into the wilderness, a scape goat, laden with iniquities and sorrows;—but, mark me! Only half the burthen is my own! The pledge I inclose, and which you will preserve in my remembrance, is the dearest thing I possess:—it belonged to one

whose grave sorrow made betimes; he received it from the young bride, whom death snatched from his side ere the priest had blessed their union;—he gave it to me. Strange things have followed the gift, but its evil charm is exhausted on my head; adversity has wrought out her work! Take it then, fearlessly, and when you would muse on something mournful, it shall speak to you of Vallensteïn! Adieu, sweet friend!"

He folded up the billet, inclosed the ring, which was a ruby heart pierced through with a diamond arrow, directed the little packet for Princess Stolberg, and placed it in his bosom; this done, he returned to his monotonous exercise, and for the live-long night paced his apartment. The task allotted to Desmond was one that required haste and address. The lieutenant would not, by ill-timed economy, cause the generous spirit of his patron to suffer impeachment; yet he felt the necessity for retaining some portion of the store intrusted to him, since, when

exhausted, from what source would it be replenished? The young Count's numerous train remonstrated, intreated, questioned, and Desmond's phlegmatic resolution could scarcely preserve itself against the grief and importunity by which he was assailed. At length, just upon the break of morning, he joined Vallensteïn—placing in his hand the purse which contained the remnant of their fortune.

"We are alone," said he, "in this wide palace. All are gone, and our horses saddled in the stable."

"Good!—And what is this for?"

"To maintain us, Count Vallensteïn."

"Psha! You should have given it to my people!"

"And on what, then, should we subsist? Beggary is not pleasant, and I doubt both your lordship and myself might prove but awkward mendicants."

"Are not the mines open?" asked Casimir, gloomily.

"Ay, my lord, but whatever your

taste may be, I prefer the earth's surface to its bowels; although, if need were that you should enter them, Desmond would not be slow to follow you."

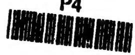
"Keep, then, what your providence has preserved for us; I shall guide it unthriftily."

When the hour arrived for opening the gates, the friends, accoutred in plain Hungarian uniform, and each supplied with a small packet of linen, were on horseback. Vallensteïn halted before that wing of the palace which contained the apartments of Princess Stolberg, and delivered his letter to one of her pages; then, having performed his last business at Vienna,

"Now, Desmond," said he, with a ghastly smile, "the world is before us!" They passed the gates, and were soon out of sight of the Austrian capital.

END OF VOL. II.

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